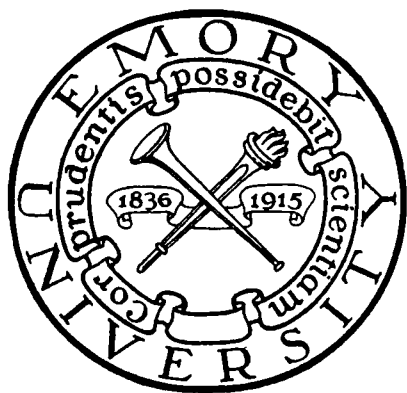


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THE CLINTONS;

OR,

DEEPS AND SHALLOWS OF LIFE.

“Oh we will walk this world
Yoked in all exercise of noble end,
And so thro’ those dark gates across the wild
That no man knows.”

TENNYSON.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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DEDICATION

TO

ARAMI.

TAKE thou the gift, my friend !

It is not worthy of thee—but I know
Thou wilt not scorn the meanest plants that grow
Within my spirit's garden. Thou wilt bend
Approving glances on these wilding flowers,
And in their fragrance find the breath of by-gone hours.

They are not bright nor rare :

A perishable wreath is this of mine,
And with unskilful hand I strove to twine
Its leaves and blossoms. If thou deem'st them fair
I shall not grieve, although the world pass by
The garland at thy feet with cold averted eye.

Ever the thought of thee

Lay deep within my spirit as I wrote.
How oft across the page would visions float
Fresh from the bright and treasured memory

Of Northern summer days, when o'er the heather
Our linked steps roamed far, while still we dreamed
together !

Of all my years gone by,
How few have passed unbrightened by our meeting !
The music of thine old familiar greeting
Echoes within my heart undyingly.
All things are fairer to me for thy love,
It lights my pathway here, it points to light above.

But words are vain to tell
The joy of our communion. We two know
A life-time cannot measure all we owe
Each to the other. There is no farewell
To our immortal friendship, which had birth
While yet, with folded wings, our spirits clung to
earth !

And now I bring to thee
What mine has gathered in its trial flight,
Tho' near the ground, yet raising towards the light
Its weak and earth-stained plumes aspiringly.
Accept the offering—were it high or great
It were more worthy thee, to whom 'tis dedicate.

APRIL, 1853.

THE CLINTONS.

CHAPTER I.

Bear thro' sorrow, wrong, and ruth,
In thy heart the dew of youth,
On thy lips the smile of truth.

LONGFELLOW.

“COME, Alice, it is your turn now. The boat's ready, and Lilian has had enough of it. Come along!”

These words were spoken by a boy of about fourteen years old, who was running eagerly up a smooth, green bank towards a seat under a large chesnut-tree, where a gentleman was

seated, with a little girl at his feet. The child was sitting on the turf, her head resting upon her father's knee, while his hand strayed idly among the waves of her brown hair. She started at the boy's voice, but did not rise.

"Oh, uncle!" cried he, "let Alice come now. She is always with you. Let me give her one row."

"But not yet, papa. Let me stay with you a little longer. Don't send me away this minute."

And the child looked pleadingly in her father's face.

"Alice dear," he said, "don't you remember that Wilfred is going to school tomorrow? You will not see him again for a long time."

The little girl rose instantly, and ran to the boy's side, putting her little hand in his. He looked down upon her with an expression of boyish protecting affection, and led her down the bank as tenderly as her mother could have

done. Her father need not fear, though she was going on the river with a school-boy for her guardian.

The two children arrived at the river-side together, where they met their third companion, a beautiful little girl of ten years old, who was awaiting them with the boat. She was standing by the water, her straw hat lying at her feet, and her long golden curls glittering and flashing in the sunlight as the wind stirred among their bright tangles ; her blue eyes sparkled with childish happiness, and her form and attitude were full of native grace and beauty.

“ So you have brought Alice after all ! ” she exclaimed, on seeing her two playfellows. “ Well, Alice, are you tired of being wise at last ? Good-bye, I shall go to papa now ; ” and she ran lightly up the bank.

Wilfred carefully put his little companion into the boat, and rowed her slowly up the river.

It is time the reader should know something of the parentage of these three children, for it is expected that he will feel no small interest in the events of their after years.

A spectator would suppose that the grave, gentle, and almost feminine-looking boy was brother to the little girl he watched so tenderly, and that the bright and beautiful Lilian belonged to another family, and could not be the daughter of that tall, dark-eyed gentleman who sat under the chesnut-tree, watching the children at their sports with an earnest, half-melancholy countenance. But so it was. He was the father of Lilian and Alice, though no likeness could be traced between himself and his elder child, while Alice's soft eyes and thoughtful countenance were the transcript of his own.

Wilfred was unlike both, save that his hair was of the hue of Lilian's, though it reflected the sunshine with a paler and less glittering light; and there was a dreamy tenderness in

his eyes, making their blue depths resemble the shadowy tints of Alice's. He was their cousin—the son of their mother's sister—their favourite playmate, preferred, for his unvarying gentleness and good temper, to his younger brother, whose age might have made him a more suitable companion for the little girls. Their father almost loved Wilfred as a son—for he had none of his own—and there was something to him inexpressibly endearing in the boy's character. Colonel Clinton had hardly a greater pleasure, next to an hour's talk with his little Alice, than to sit, as was his wont, under the chesnut-tree, while his children played, fished, or rowed with their cousin on the few days during the Midsummer holidays, which his parents would allow him to spend at Richmond.

Colonel Clinton sat watching by turns the little skiff as it glided up and down the stream, and the graceful movements of Lilian, who was gathering woodbine and sweet briar from an

old oak round which they had twined themselves in luxuriant growth. His eye rested with a look of pride on his beautiful child, but there was a deeper tenderness in its expression when it turned towards Alice, as she sat with Wilfred in the boat, absorbed in attention to his words. She was, indeed, her father's best loved child—the tenant of his heart's warmest recess, the source of his purest moments of happiness, the joy of his fireside, where, alas ! there were few other joys for him.

Yet there were many who looked enviously on Colonel Clinton's domestic position, and deemed him the happiest of men, for he was rich, and had every luxury that money and taste could procure. His wife was one of the loveliest, most agreeable, refined, talented women (as far as *they* could see) that had ever graced the most fastidious circles of society ; his children were both promising, and one bid fair to surpass her mother's beauty. He had one of the best houses in London,

the most perfect little park at Richmond, no cares, no country-place, no anxieties, no debts—good health, calm temper, and an attractive person. Therefore, the world decided that Colonel Clinton was in possession of perfect felicity.

The world does not know that there are wants which none of these things can satisfy, and which, unsatisfied, mar the brightest destiny. The world had no idea that Colonel Clinton would have valued a woman's sympathy, a woman's home influence, and delicate discriminating judgment, more than all that he possessed. Nor did the world know that his brilliant wife was to him little more than a lasting, living disappointment, failing in these qualities, and in almost all that could have made her a help-meet for him.

He loved her still, for his was a steadfast nature, and his youth's devotion could not subside into indifference through any lapse of years, any accumulation of disappointing cir-

cumstances. They had married in early youth, when they were each as much attached to the other as was possible for their different natures : the one true, earnest, deeply sensitive, and all but incapable of change where his affections were concerned—the other weak, vain, restless both in thought and feeling, and too cold-hearted to be ever deeply touched by another's tenderness.

It were needless to relate how these two uncongenial dispositions had come together, or how Henry Clinton had deceived himself into such an affection for an unworthy object, and such blindness to her faults ; perhaps they had not then grown into such hideous distinctness ; perhaps her short-lived but real affection for him had, while it lasted, done what true affection never fails to do towards elevating the moral being. Be it as it may, they had bound themselves to each other, and if to one of them that union had brought no more than the cold shadow of happiness, the other had never yet

been told of the ruin she had caused by one harsh word or deed. Though he soon discovered that there was no domestic happiness for him, and though he felt that to his nature *that* happiness was nearly indispensable, yet in all the bitterness of this discovery, this crushing fall of his best hopes, he let no feeling of harshness, no unkind blame of another, harbour in his mind.

He devoted himself to procuring the happiness of her who, with all her faults, had been the free choice of his heart; and though now for twelve years his life had been one long sacrifice, one series of endeavours to satisfy at the expense of his own tastes and wishes, the restless, frivolous desires of his wife, still he was rewarded by the peace that ever follows the patient bearing of any cross—especially one involving, as this did, a daily abnegation of self, and daily efforts for the sake of another. He was rewarded, also, by his wife's few moments of fitful gratitude, and by the sight of her

extreme delight on every fresh concession to her wishes.

When he purchased his magnificent London house with the money he had destined for the acquisition of a home in one of the most beautiful though remote parts of England, he thought himself almost repaid for the sacrifice by the month that followed, during which Mrs. Clinton was in perpetual good-humour, and almost as charming at home as in society.

Time lightens every trial, and habit dulls the point of every "thorn in the side." There were higher influences than these engaged in reconciling Colonel Clinton to his fate; but these too had their salutary effect, and though the world was mistaken in attributing to him perfect happiness, yet he was very far from experiencing the reverse. He was happy in his children, happy in the bright hopes with which he regarded their future; he was happy too, in his strong affection for

Wilfred Lynne—he could trace something of himself in the boy's earnest, tender disposition, and was touched by the enthusiastic reverence with which that young spirit turned to him, always submitting to his influence, and seeking his guidance in every boyish difficulty.

This summer evening was one of his happiest hours. It was the last day of Wilfred's holidays, and the boy had obtained leave to spend it with his uncle and cousins. The former had enjoyed that long, sunny afternoon almost as much as the children he protected with his presence, for he knew how much that presence increased their enjoyment, and they could not safely be allowed to row on the Thames beyond his sight.

The skiff was now moored in its accustomed place; Wilfred was leading Alice up the slope towards her father.

“ You see, uncle,” he said, “ I have brought Alice back to you. The boat is fastened quite safely. I have had my last of it. It will be no

rowing weather, I'm afraid, when I come here again."

"But you will have plenty of rowing at Eton," said Lilian, "and boys to play with, and friends to talk to. I don't pity you, Wilfred. Besides, you like studying. You can't be sorry to go back to school."

"Sorry!" cried the boy, "do you think I can leave you, and little Alice, and my uncle and aunt without being sorry—it's something worse than sorry—it's—" but here he was checked by a shy reserve, instinctive in every schoolboy who finds himself on the point of expressing his feelings; his heightened colour and glistening eyes, however, spoke eloquently.

Alice crept to his side, and twined her tiny fingers round his own. Lilian laughingly said she would pity him if he liked, but she thought going to school was no great hardship.

Colonel Clinton rose, and proposed that they should all come in.

“It is getting late,” he said, “and tea will be ready. Come, Wilfred, don’t look back at the river. You will see it again before Christmas, and many times, I hope. Your aunt is waiting for us in the drawing-room.”

They passed through the open window, and entered the room where Mrs. Clinton was sitting, half hidden by the muslin curtains and the fluttering folds of her white dress. She was making tea, and before her were the most tasteful appliances that could be employed in the service of preparing that enjoyable repast. She was surrounded by all that could give an air of luxurious comfort and exquisite taste to an English interior, and her own appearance was in character with the scene. Her beautiful features wore an expression of cheerful good-humour not always to be seen there, and her blue eyes spoke a welcome to those who had just entered, which brought unusual gladness to the heart of one of them. He rejoiced at the mood, though he felt it was but a mood,

which had given to her countenance, always so beautiful, its present beauty of expression.

“You have brought in the children in good time, to-night,” she said. “I hope you have had a pleasant day, Wilfred ; I am sorry it is the last. Run away, children, and leave your hats up-stairs, and come down with your hair fit to be seen.”

The two little girls disappeared.

“Aunt,” said Wilfred, colouring and hesitating, “I wish I knew how to thank you and Uncle Henry, for all your kindness to me these holidays. I have had so many pleasant days with you and my cousins, I could not go away without telling you so.”

“Why, Wilfred, you are quite sentimental. You need not thank us ; you know we are always glad to see you.”

“Always,” said his uncle, “you are always welcome here. But, my dear boy, you must not be cast down about returning to school ; you have so much to learn, and you know how

anxiously I watch your progress, and what hopes and expectations I have for you."

"There, Wilfred," said Mrs. Clinton, "we mean you to distinguish yourself. You are to be something wonderful!"

"Something good and true, I am sure he will be," said Colonel Clinton, laying his hand affectionately on the boy's shoulder. "Something real and earnest, a faithful promoter of the cause of truth. You will read and study, Wilfred, because 'knowledge is power,' power to do good—to influence men's minds for their highest benefit—power to dispel ignorance, to combat error. You will not need a selfish stimulus; you will have a higher motive than emulation."

"Poor boy!" cried his aunt. "Must he be preached to on his last day of liberty? Come to tea, Wilfred, and forget your troubles."

The children had returned with heads as smooth as their fastidious mother could wish; and the conversation between Wilfred and his

uncle was effectually checked. The short evening passed but too quickly, and the parting was not prolonged. Wilfred underwent twenty kisses from his aunt with great philosophy ; but there were tears in his eyes as Lilian and Alice took leave of him, and they fell unchecked in spite of all his masculine resolution when his uncle accompanied him to the door, and spoke his kind farewell and earnest affectionate wishes for the improvement and prosperity of his schoolboy friend.

Thus ended one of childhood's "long, bright, golden days." A day of unmixed pleasure while it lasted, of acute sorrow, though but for a moment, at its close.

It is night. Lilian and Alice are wrapt in the dreamless sleep of innocence, and Wilfred sits alone in his little room in the house of his parents. His uncle's words still linger in his ears, and his young heart is full of tumultuous hopes, eager wishes, and a high ambition, not such as commonly haunts the day dreams of

youth. Child as he was, there were full-grown feelings and hopes, not unknown to manhood within his childish heart, and his faith was strong and unshaken in its simplicity, as that of an aged martyr. At that hour, the evening prayers of many were rising to Heaven from that vast city. Its spiritual atmosphere was fragrant with incense from thousands of faithful and loving hearts ; but there arose no purer offering than the earnest supplications of that child, as he knelt alone in his little chamber for the last time before returning to his world of trial and temptation.

CHAPTER II.

Peace, peace ! he is not dead, he doth not sleep !
He hath awakened from the dream of life :
'Tis we, who lost in stormy visions, keep
With phantoms an unprofitable strife,
And in mad trance strike with our spirit's knife
Invulnerable nothings. We decay
Like corpses in a charnel : fear and grief
Convulse us and consume us, day by day,
And cold hopes swarm like worms within our living clay.

SHELLEY.

SEVEN years have passed. The three children from whom we parted in the last chapter, are standing on the threshold of maturity, and about to enter upon life's responsibilities. Their childhood is at an end, but in each of them its

promises are fulfilled, and they are but the development of what they were in those forgotten days.

We must, however, now turn to other scenes and other persons. In a gloomy room of the gloomiest house in Cavendish Square, a family are sitting at breakfast. It consists of three persons and a solemn-looking cat, the latter engaged in receiving a small supply of milk, bestowed with many caresses and a great flow of words by the good-humoured lady who presided at the meal. She was a comely though ungraceful person ; and her countenance wore an expression of indolent benevolence and apathetic good-nature, which was certainly not unpleasing to behold, and was by far the most cheerful object in the room, where cheerfulness was apparently very scarce.

There was not a trace of it in the features of the tall gentleman who sat stiffly opposite his wife, or rather opposite the equally stiff and important-looking tea-urn that divided the pair.

The cold gravity his countenance displayed, was evidently its habitual expression, for time had confirmed many lines, especially round his tightly-closed mouth, which were less expressive of thought than of moroseness. Yet his temper was as calm as that of his placid wife—perhaps calmer, for she could be roused into what she called “a fuss,” while he was impenetrable to the influences of small vexations. The same gloom, without the same calmness, reigned on the youthful features of his daughter, who sat beside him, repeating his own stiff attitude. She combined her mother’s fair complexion and tolerably regular features, with something more unpleasing than her father’s dark cast of countenance ; and when she spoke, it was with a voice both deep and harsh, which would have given a tone of reproof to the softest flattery—could such a thing as flattery ever proceed from those closed lips, which seemed formed only for the utterance of such truths as kinder natures would conceal.

The well-known postman's knock startled the cat from her refreshment, and the whole party from their silence.

"I hope to goodness we shall hear how Henry is," said Mrs. Lynne, her countenance suddenly assuming a most eager expression, entirely different from that which it had borne a moment ago.

"I hope we shall," said her husband. "I do not know what hoping to goodness means; you would do well to avoid the expression."

"Dear me, James, when one is in a fuss, don't be so particular. I wonder how Henry is. I don't know what to think about his illness. Wilfred wrote in great alarm; but Florence seemed to think it would not signify much. Barbara, what do you think about it?"

Barbara replied with the consolatory information that she did not know what to think, but supposed Aunt Florence knew best, and certainly Wilfred knew nothing about illness; adding,

that as the post was come, they would soon be enlightened.

She was right, for at this moment a letter was given to Mrs. Lynne, which she had no sooner opened, than, transferring it to Barbara, she rose, walked to an arm-chair, and sitting down therein, began to cry.

Mr. Lynne was moved for once, and followed her, saying :

“What’s the matter, my dear? What has happened? Is Clinton worse? Is the letter from Wilfred? What is the use of giving way?”

“Uncle Henry is dead,” said Barbara’s hard voice.

“Oh dear!” sobbed her mother—“oh dear! what will poor dear Florence do? And Lilian and Alice! and Wilfred writes in such grief! Oh! who would ever have expected it! I never thought he was so ill—I never—” and a fresh torrent of tears checked the words.

“My dear, life is uncertain, and trials must be expected.”

“Mamma, you know I told you yesterday there was certainly some cause for alarm.”

These were the words of consolation addressed by her husband and daughter to the mourner. They thought nothing could be more kind, more appropriate, than their respective remarks. Perhaps they were not without effect, for the sobs became less violent, and Mrs. Lynne stretched out her hand for the letter, saying :

“I have not read it all. Does Wilfred say how they are ?”

“Read it to her, Barbara,” said Mr. Lynne. Barbara obeyed, the hard voice a little subdued as she proceeded. It was a short note, evidently written in great agitation and haste. After a few words of hurried, though affectionate preparation for the shock that was to follow, the writer said :

“We had not even been alarmed about him,

till within twenty-four hours of the end; but from the first appearance of danger all efforts, all remedies, were fruitless. He did not suffer quite at the close, and took leave of us all, speaking calmly of his approaching end, and remembering each of us with his own peculiar kindness. I can write no more, and hardly know what I have said. My poor aunt is in an agony of grief, and Lilian's sorrow is more than I can bear to witness. Alice is calmer, but suffers much. Dear mother, you will remember this stricken family in your prayers; and you will feel for me, too, in my first sorrow, for I have lost my earliest friend."

There was a postscript, in which Wilfred said, that it was his aunt's wish that he should remain at Richmond for the present; and, therefore, his mother was not to expect him.

A few moments passed in tears and incoherent lamentations, on the part of Mrs. Lynne, while the father and daughter stood silently beside her.

At last she became calm, and said :

“ Poor Florence ! what will become of her ? James, you ought to go to them ; you might be of use. I would go, but really—poor dear Florence !—what could I say ? and she never would listen to me. If you went, you would help them all ! ”

“ I could not help them,” said Mr. Lynne. “ I feel for them very much ; but nothing that I could say is likely to be of use to your sister, my dear. We will hope that this trial may produce in her the change that must take place, before *my* society could afford her any comfort. This sudden bereavement may prove a blessing to her and to her thoughtless children ; besides, Wilfred is with them, and as they are all so fond of him, his presence will be quite sufficient.”

“ Well, James, you are right, of course ; and I can’t spare you, I don’t know what I should do without you. Such a dreadful shock ! and I don’t know when we shall hear again. It will kill Florence ! it will, indeed ! ”

“ Oh, mamma,” said Barbara, “ Aunt Flo-

rence will soon be better. She is more upset from excitement than anything else."

This was one of Barbara's unamiable truths. Her mother was accustomed to them, and was, happily, not highly sensitive.

"I hope we shall hear that they are more composed," she said, in a little while.

Barbara agreed in the hope, and after a few more common-place observations, regrets, and condolences, the party subsided into a melancholy silence.

Mr. Lynne and Barbara sat down to write the sad intelligence to their absent relatives, and express the usual sympathy, in conventional terms, to the sorrowing family; while Mrs. Lynne sat in the same arm-chair, uttering occasional sighs and lamentations, and giving incoherent messages, to be inserted in the letters her husband and daughter were writing.

Thus passed the morning that followed Colonel Clinton's death. It produced one day of sorrow, and about a week of more than usual gloom, in the family of his sister-in-law, and

then it was forgotten ; or, at least, remembered without a pang. But there was one member of that family who mourned for his boyhood's friend with all the passionate grief of youth's first sorrow, and who felt himself shipwrecked at the very entrance of life's sea.

For Wilfred had from childhood looked upon his uncle as a guide and support, as one whose counsel was to direct him in all emergencies where his own judgment failed ; as one whose approval was worth more than a nation's suffrages, and whose esteem would reward a life of toil and sacrifice. Wilfred's heart was full of that deep enthusiasm which reigns in the breast of youth, where faith and love are strong. He was formed to look upwards—to venerate higher natures—to cling, with the strong affection that springs from reverence, to one wiser than himself, in the “ wisdom that cometh from above.” His nature was, perhaps, deficient in the self-confidence which should enable a man to direct his own steps through life ; and now that he stood alone beside the fallen column, on

whose strength he had hoped to lean for years, he felt utterly without support ; and *he* could not learn the world's hard lesson, "suffice unto thyself." His father's cold, unsympathising disposition had nothing in common with his own, and his mother's weak and trifling mind could never influence another's. Wilfred was much attached to his parents, but there had been but one being in the world whom he regarded with perfect admiration, and the strong affection that years of kindness and sympathy had raised ; and that one was taken from him—suddenly torn from his heart's core—and he was alone.

Many long years after, Wilfred looked back with thankfulness to this dark and lonely time ; for it had taught him to seek for higher guidance, to lean on a stronger arm, to ask earnestly for "a right judgment in all things," and to use that judgment fearlessly, without man's support or counsel. Even now, in the midnight of his sorrow, he found a gleam of light in knowing that his presence was some so-

lace to the widow and children of his lost friend. To the former he was of the greatest use—advising and assisting in the plans and arrangements which could not be avoided, even at such a time. To his cousins, his presence was most soothing, for they felt his unuttered sympathy, and knew that his grief was bitter as their own.

The trial had been as unexpected as it was severe. Colonel Clinton had always been healthy: and when he was attacked with what appeared a trifling illness, no fears were entertained, as it was supposed his strength of constitution would carry him through the worst form it was likely to assume. But human reasoning cannot calculate “the issues of life and death,” and in this case, even skill and science were deceived; for, at the end of about a week’s apparently slight illness, dangerous symptoms appeared; and after a day of alarm and a night of fearful watching, came the morning of despair. And it was not yet noon, when the final blow was struck that desolated a household.

Days passed by—long, dark, oppressive hours of calmer sorrow. The remains of him whose loss they mourned, lay beside his favourite river in a little churchyard where he had often sat with his children and Wilfred, telling them of the life that lay beyond the grave. The first soft days of early spring were bringing life and beauty to his forsaken home, and verdure to the cold earth which covered him; and as time passed on, it brought healing to the afflicted family—at least, the voice of grief was no longer heard among them—and their usual mode of life and daily occupations were resumed. Lilian was the first whose natural cheerfulness returned; and her conversation, and occasional gleams of something like her former gaiety, soon dispersed the last clouds of fretful sorrow which had for a time shaded her mother's beauty.

As for Alice, the favourite child of the departed one, she still appeared to suffer acutely, or would have done so to an attentive observer. Her mother and sister were not struck by the

paleness of her young cheek, the sadness of her dark and downcast eyes, or the slow and listless movements with which she pursued her ordinary occupations. They did not know that her calmness was akin to despair, that this her first sorrow was also her first experience of solitude—that solitude of the heart so inexpressibly bitter to youth. They did not know that her young and unsubdued, though outwardly placid nature was writhing under a blow it had not learnt to bear. Alice repined at the fate which had made her fatherless, and struggled hard not to resign herself, but to conceal her sufferings. Her soul was darkened for a time, and her faith grew weak.

Let no one judge her harshly, or say that her sin was heavy. She had grown up in happiness, in the consciousness of a father's protecting love and sympathy. She had looked up to Heaven in joy and thankfulness, and felt, as in a dream, that she had a Father there whom she loved and trusted. But now the whole current of her life was changed—its one

great blessing was removed. The sun had fallen from her firmament—her joy was at an end, and her thankfulness failed with it. Her dreamy faith could not support her now—her beautiful imaginings had vanished before the reality of her grief. Earth seemed a lonely, barren waste ; Heaven an unreal cloud-land, bright, perhaps, but distant, intangible, and comfortless. Her spirit was crushed and made no effort to arise. A frost had fallen on the spring-time of her heart, and its buds had perished. She could not feel that it had but retarded the blossoms whose native soil was that stricken heart.

She sorrowed silently and bitterly at first, if not without hope, at least without consolation. But even to her, time brought a diminution of suffering ; and when the trees were green, and the air fragrant with the breath of early summer ; when the sunset light fell with golden radiance on the smooth turf and smoother stream, and the rejoicing flowers came thronging up from the dark earth, then in the midst of

Alice's deep grief, a softening influence was acknowledged, and the spirit of the season infused itself into her heart. She was not happy—not even peaceful: there were days when she almost murmured at the beauty and gladness of surrounding things, so unsuited to the darkness within her; but these days were few, and as the year advanced she felt more and more calmed by the sweet influences of nature. She was formed to feel those influences, to listen reverently to the teachings of outward things—to look on the book of nature as God's unwritten word; and if to her its characters were dim, and she could not read their meaning, it was from their own excessive radiance dazzling her untaught vision.

Summer came, and all was bright and beautiful without, and, to a casual observer, scarcely less so within that homestead. There was no change, save that one was absent; and the sable garb of those who remained behind was all that revealed that that one would never return. His vacant chair was not to be seen;

his picture was removed from the wall; his boat no longer lay moored beside the chesnut tree; even his dog was gone—it had become the companion of Wilfred: all these mute memorials had disappeared—"They were too painful," Mrs. Clinton said—and not one was spared.

Why cannot we cherish the memory of the loved and lost, when time has healed the sting of parting, without injury to our happiness? Why must we cast away everything that recalls the departed one, or else grieve when the sight of each treasured relic brings back the thought of him whom we shall shortly follow? Surely because our spirit's sight is more dim, our spirit's love more cold than even this tenement of clay need make them—because we do not give more than mere intellectual assent to those articles of our Creed which tell us of the Communion of Saints, the Resurrection of the Body, and the Life Everlasting.

CHAPTER III.

Their innocent faces open like a book

Full of sweet prophecies of coming good :

And we, who pore thereon with loving look,

Read what we most desire, not what we should :

Ev'n that which suits our own ambition's mood.

MRS. NORTON.

IT was a bright afternoon in May. The park was crowded. A slow and constant stream of carriages of every form, size, and hue, circulated incessantly among its brilliant thoroughfares ; the walks swarmed with pedestrians of all classes ; and the rails appeared to have been superseded by a black wall, which, on nearer inspection, proved to be a long row of

idle men, all gazing with more or less interest on the passing vehicles—glancing carelessly at the anomalous phaetons and nameless conveyances that disfigured the pageant, following with admiring looks the fair, though weary-looking occupants of some graceful barouche, or endeavouring to penetrate with the eye into the dim recesses of some well-known landau, the shrine of a hidden gem.

Among these spectators was a tall man, whose immoderate moustache, faultless attire, and vacant, though perfectly self-satisfied countenance, bespoke him “in the Life Guards.” Leaning on the rails, at his right hand, was a handsome, though not very prepossessing youth, apparently about nineteen or twenty; and at his left was another young man, evidently the elder brother of the last-mentioned, and greatly resembling him in feature, though his expression was far more pleasing, perhaps because there was less of it. They were both, for the time, the intimate friends of the officer who stood between them, and the three were

engaged in one common pursuit and endeavour—to find pleasure, and to kill time.

“Come, Lynne, let’s walk,” said the officer, in somniferous accents, touching the arm of his elder friend. “This is a bore. There’s nobody in the park to-day.”

“Nobody!” cried Harry Lynne, the younger of the two. “Look at all those carriages!”

“Those are nobody,” oracularly responded Captain Travers.

“Of course they are nobody,” said Frederick Lynne.

This being decided, they left the rails, and wound their way, with some difficulty, out of the crowd of individuals, whom they found to be, however incorporeal, very substantial obstacles.

“We must go home, Fred,” said Harry; “it’s dinner-time.”

Captain Travers was so infinitely amazed, that his eyes became fully open, and he spoke without a drawl.

“Did you say dinner-time?” he inquired.

Frederick quickly answered :

“It is our hard fate for this day. There are some friends of my father’s—slow people, of course—going to dine with him at some unnatural hour, and he wants us to come home for them. I should have thought Wilfred would have been enough. But they won’t stay late; and then we’ll meet you, Travers, somewhere or other. You know it won’t do—at least, it won’t do for us—not to be civil at home.”

“I hope you’ll live through it,” said Captain Travers, relapsing to his lethargic tone. “So your brother Wilfred’s here! Where does he bury himself? I have scarcely seen him since we left Eton together. He was a very good fellow then.”

“So he is still,” said Harry.

“But slow,” interrupted Frederick.

“Slow, perhaps,” continued the first speaker; “but it’s all right as he’s to be a parson. He is almost always with the Clintons at Richmond.”

“ Clintons ? Ah ! I know,” said the officer. “ That handsome Mrs. Clinton’s your aunt—is not she ? By the bye, why isn’t she here ? ”

“ Don’t you know her husband died two or three months ago ? ”

“ I know,” again said the officer (it was an unexpected pleasure to hear that he knew anything), “ Colonel Clinton. So he’s dead ! Yes, I heard it before. There are some pretty daughters, somebody said.”

“ Two daughters. Only one of them pretty, and so clever. She is the eldest.”

“ Will she be a catch ? ” inquired Captain Travers.

“ They have both got fortunes alike,” was the reply, “ and very large ones—I don’t know exactly how much—and my aunt has the house in Belgrave Square, and the villa at Richmond, for her life.”

“ Happy woman ! ” said the Captain. “ And what a lucky fellow your brother is ! ”

“ Lucky, indeed ! ” replied Frederick. “ They

make such a favourite of him ; and he's always walking about and talking to those girls."

"Too bad of him," said the officer. "It's not fair—he gets the start of everybody else. Which of them has he appropriated? Of course he is trying to win one of them?"

"I shouldn't wonder if he succeeded," answered Frederick; "and it would be very strange if he did not try."

"He will try," interposed Harry. "I know he is always thinking about Lilian."

"The pretty one, of course?"

Harry said :

"Yes."

"What a bore!" was Captain Travers's lament over this painful intelligence, which blighted his rising hopes of conquering a beauty and an heiress in the course of the ensuing season. "Does she like him?" he continued.

"She does not like any one else," said Harry.

“Why, she can have seen nobody except you two and Wilfred, and it seems he’s the favourite. Why don’t you try your chance, little Harry?”

“Because I don’t wish to do anything of the kind,” said the youth, half-resenting the Captain’s adjective, “and I won’t stand in Wilfred’s light.”

“Well, you will not cut him out in his profession when you have entered it too. He will be a bishop before you, Harry.”

“Don’t talk about it, Travers,” cried Harry, in an aggrieved tone. “I have nearly four years before me still. I wish you wouldn’t remind me of it.”

“He has no fancy for the Church,” said his elder brother, laughing, “and Wilfred has no fancy for anything else—except for Lilian, perhaps. I should have thought Alice was more in his line.”

“Who’s Alice?” asked Captain Travers, yawning.

“Lilian’s sister,” was the reply.

"Fortunes alike, didn't you say?"

"Yes, They are to come out next year ; and their mother will give them an effective *début*, I am sure."

"The second is not pretty you said?"

"She's only sixteen now," answered Frederick, "and one can't quite judge. She may turn out pretty enough, but not to be compared to her mother and sister."

"How pleasant for her," said Captain Travers, "if Wilfred marries her sister, and takes her safe out of the way before next season !"

"Oh ! Alice is not that sort of girl," said Harry.

"My dear innocent, there is no other sort of girl," gravely remarked Captain Travers, his yellow moustache curling as he spoke. "A pretty sister is always detrimental, and acknowledged as such by the sufferer."

They had now reached the door of Mr. Lynne's house in Cavendish Square.

"We'll look in at the opera," said Frederick,

“when all the bores are gone. There will be plenty of time. I suppose we shall find you there?”

“Perhaps you will,” said Captain Travers. And the friends parted—the brothers entering the house, and the officer, walking slowly and languidly away, to resume his place at the Park rails.

It is not worth our while to follow him—nor shall the reader be compelled to accompany the young Lynnes to their father’s dreary dinner-table. I must, however, give him some information as to the character and prospects of these brothers, for he will meet with them again in his course through these volumes.

Frederick was Mr. Lynne’s eldest son, and his mother’s favourite. He resembled her in weakness of character, and her over-indulgence in his childhood had sown the seeds of selfishness, which had now grown up in his mind to the exclusion, or at least injury, of many good qualities originally planted there.

His father’s extreme strictness, and stern

enforcement of rules, as well as his rigid, wearisome method of imparting what he intended for religious instruction, had made home a scene of penance to the boy, which his mother's adoring tenderness could hardly alleviate, for her caresses were tiresome, and her conversation uninteresting. He went to school enraptured at escaping from his father's iron rule, and when long, dull epistles of paternal reproof, warning, and instruction, arrived weekly, they only served as objects of ridicule and exercise of nascent wit for him and his school-fellows. When his brother Wilfred joined him at Eton, and received a share in the weekly lectures, they were protected from insult, for the younger boy kept them carefully, and *he* was too great a favourite to be molested, even by those who thought it right to laugh at his peculiarities.

Frederick returned from Eton with a dim recollection of the Latin Grammar, and a few lines from Homer, a slight idea of arithmetic, and a profound knowledge of the arts of swimming, rowing, and playing at cricket, also an

intense desire to enter a cavalry regiment. This was steadily opposed by his father, who told him he would buy him a piece of bush in Australia rather than a commission; and Mrs. Lynne, who always thought her husband was right, could only cry over poor Fred's disappointment, and wonder how he ever came to think of such a thing.

Frederick went to Oxford, and distinguished himself by riding clandestine steeple-chases, incurring debts, and being plucked. For *this* he blamed his father, who had insisted on his taking a degree. His mother cried more than ever, and his sister Barbara having discovered the secret of the steeple-chases, revealed it, and Frederick was recalled, his debts paid by his father, and his horses sold. From that period he spent his time in discontented idleness, under the pretence of studying at the Temple, his father having condemned him to the bar, of which his mother believed he would in time become the brightest ornament.

Wilfred and Harry were both intended for

the Church. The former rejoiced at his high vocation with humble thankfulness, and had never felt a wish to enter another career ; but Harry recoiled from the idea, and longed for an active life of personal exertion and excitement. His education had not been wasted, for he had good abilities and much quickness, and vanity and emulation had helped him to excel in many branches of art and literature. He loved to be known, admired, applauded—to win the world's suffrages ; and he could almost find it in his heart to kill the man who stung him with a word or look of ridicule or contempt.

Such was the character of the youth whom his father destined for the Christian priesthood ; to this impetuous, self-loving nature the care of souls was to be committed, this slave of the world was to be a “pattern to the flock of Christ,” this proud, ambitious spirit was “to maintain quietness, peace, and love” among those committed to his charge. He was young, it is true, and might at any time abandon his careless life, and dispose himself to receive those

heavenly gifts and graces of which he was then so deeply though unconsciously in need ; but to human sight there was no promise of amendment, no room to hope that he was becoming fit for the calling to which his father had destined him.

But Mr. Lynne's resolution was fixed, and because his youngest son was not extravagant like Frederick, did not care for horses, and had just taken honours at Oxford, he thought his hopes for him would be surely realised, the more so, that he felt no doubt that he had done all that was possible to instil religious principle into his children's minds. But unfortunately, such teaching had not been instilled, but inflicted. The boys were incessantly lectured, read to, written to, taken to church and to long uninteresting meetings, till they shrunk from the idea of " religious occupation," and dreaded the return of Sunday as a day spent in that occupation alone. Mr. Lynne was sincere in his anxiety for his sons, but he was devoid of tact and judgment, utterly unimaginative, in-

capable of discerning character, and naturally self-opinionated.

Frederick had disappointed him ; this he felt as a trial, but resigned himself because resignation was a duty ; and he derived some consolation from the thought that he could not blame himself for any neglect or over-indulgence. He was satisfied with Wilfred, though he sometimes thought him weak, and always fanciful, and for Harry he was hopeful, and greatly pleased at his literary successes. In his eldest child, Barbara, he could scarcely detect a fault. There was little warmth and no enthusiasm in his affection for her, but he often said to himself that she was precisely what he would desire his daughter to be ; her strength of character, her practical sense, her reasoning turn of mind, her exceeding sincerity and firmness of purpose were by turns the subjects of his quiet, unspoken commendation. She excelled in all the qualities her mother lacked, and Mrs. Lynne always yielded to her the same submissive

obedience as she did to him whose inflexible character was mirrored in that of Barbara.

Mrs. Lynne, with all her weakness and all her folly, was both good and gentle, and of a placid, contented nature, never experiencing any extreme of sorrow or joy, yet easily moved to the display of every passing feeling. She admired her husband with all her heart, and saw some peculiar perfection in each of her children, and indeed in every one belonging to her. She thought her sister, Mrs. Clinton, more beautiful and fascinating than any living woman, except, perhaps, Barbara ; and she was full of prophecies of the future excellence and beauty of her nieces, interspersed with lamentations over the worldly education they were receiving, and the errors and mistakes of their mother.

We will now leave the Lynne family for a time, and return to their more interesting relatives.

CHAPTER IV.

They say he's dying all for love, but that can never be :
They say his heart is breaking, mother—what is that to
me ?

There's many a bolder lad 'ill woo me any summer day,
And I'm to be Queen o' the May, mother, I'm to be
Queen o' the May.

TENNYSON.

SUMMER, autumn, winter, had brought their successive changes to the home of the Clinton family, since its master was taken from its head. The lawn was now gay with crocuses of every hue, and the turfy banks were white with snowdrops. Within the walls of the half Italian villa, all was comfort and brightness.

The clear winter sun of a February afternoon, was rapidly extinguishing the remains of a fire, and tinting the walls and floor with a rosy light from the half-drawn curtains. Its welcome rays glinted cheerily from the many mirrors, and from the brilliant trifles that strewed the tables.

Mrs. Clinton reclined indolently in the softest arm-chair by the fire, her widow's dress modified into becomingness ; and perhaps the brightest object in the room was the long golden lock that had escaped from under her cap, which she was pretending to re-arrange with the whitest hand in the world.

Lilian sat opposite her, engaged in cutting the leaves of a book, and glancing occasionally at her sister, who was seated in the recess of the oriel window, with an easel before her, idly leaning over her half-finished picture, from which her thoughts had evidently wandered. There was a touching sadness in Alice's attitude, and even in the fall of her black dress, which the sun seemed to avoid, the slanting

beams passing her by, to light up Lilian's shining curls. Her eyes were fixed upon her picture; they were not bright eyes, nor blue, nor even hazel; it would be hard to name their colour, and if people had spoken of them at all, every one would have described them in different terms. But all would agree that they were dark, and singularly expressive of every feeling but mirth, which never could be said to shine from them, as it did from the blue firmaments of Lilian's. Alice's hair was brown, and no one could call it anything else; hers were neither raven, golden, nor sunny locks; nothing but dark, shadowy tresses somewhat negligently arranged round her well-shaped head. Her figure was slight and drooping, though not tall, and her face was pale, evidently more from want of happiness than of health.

"What are you doing, Alice?" asked Mrs. Clinton, slowly raising herself and looking round.

Alice roused herself from her abstraction, but seemed quite unprepared with a reply. It

was, however, not needed, for Lilian rose, and taking Alice's drawing-book from the easel, displayed a sheet of paper darkened here and there with sepia, but it must be confessed, representing no form, animate or inanimate.

"What is this going to be, Alice?" said Lilian, looking kindly, though with a sort of latent sarcasm at her sister.

"I don't quite know," replied Alice. "I believe I was thinking of last week's snow-storm, of that night when the old thorn was blown down, and of other things too; and I tried to make some lights and shades, intending afterwards to turn them into a picture, if I could: but it is impossible, the beginning is all wrong."

Lilian took her sister's brush, and in a few minutes, on the apparently hopeless sheet appeared a beautiful and effective landscape, representing a snow-storm in an Alpine valley. It was but a sketch, done in the roughest manner, but almost perfect in its way.

Alice sighed, and looked admiringly at her

sister, and almost enthusiastically at the drawing, saying :

“ How beautiful it is, that dark pine forest ! I can almost hear the wind roaring through its depths, and the groans of that falling tree.”

Mrs. Clinton lazily extended her hand for the drawing, and praised Lilian for being so clever as to make such a picture on the paper that Alice had spoilt, little thinking that she had only profited by her sister's dim suggestions which, as an artist, she had understood.

“ I wish, Alice,” she said, “ you would take more pains with your accomplishments ; surely you have abilities enough to finish something ; and yet there is not a picture of yours in the house, while the walls might be covered with Lilian's. I can't think how you spend your time : nothing is ever done by you. I always intended both my daughters to be accomplished ; and, my dear, without being clever, you might do a little more to make yourself agreeable.”

Lilian looked pained, and taking her sister's hand, said :

“Mamma, Alice can do a great deal if she likes; she began this drawing, you know, and she always helps me with mine.”

It was beautiful to see the momentary light that fell on Alice's pale countenance, and gleamed from her deep eyes as her sister spoke: but it was unnoticed by their mother, whose volatile mind had turned to other subjects.

“I had a visitor this morning, while you were out walking,” she said.

“A visitor, mamma! so early! Who was it?” cried Lilian.

“Mr. Desmond,” was the reply. “Do you remember him?”

“I do,” said Alice. “I recollect, years ago, a Mr. and Mrs. Desmond spent a few days with us. They were on their way somewhere abroad, I think. Don't you remember, Lilian? We were quite little children, and they were very good-natured to us.”

“I remember,” said Lilian, “they were just married, and Mrs. Desmond showed us her new

things. They were going to Ireland. Did they both call, mamma?"

"Mrs. Desmond has been dead these six years," answered Mrs. Clinton. "The Irish climate killed her, I believe. Have you never heard your poor father talk of Maurice Desmond? He was very fond of him, though I could never see anything remarkable in him. I had not seen him nor heard of him for years until he came this morning. It was quite startling."

"Is he nice?" inquired Lilian.

"Nice, my dear! He is an Irishman, and has a dismal old place by the sea-side, in the south of Ireland. I was there once, in the time of his father and mother, before you were born. There was nothing nice about either the place or the people."

"How very sad," said Alice, "to lose his wife so soon. Did she leave any children?"

"She left a wretched little pair of twin

daughters, and died before she had been married a year and a half. I believe he left the babies with her relations, and went abroad, in great grief of course. I thought her a foolish little creature, and him excessively dull."

Alice felt interested in this melancholy tale, though it was told so lightly.

"Are the children alive?" she inquired.

"They are," said Mrs. Clinton. "He told me all his plans this morning. He was on his way to Brighton, where he has taken a house, and established his children with a governess. He came home from the continent a month ago, and now, of course, he means to marry again."

"I wonder who would marry an Irish widower with twin daughters?" said Lilian, laughing.

"My dear, there are people in the world who would do anything, and marry anybody. He will light upon one of them, of course."

"I should scarcely think so," said Alice.

"I can hardly imagine a more difficult position than a step-mother's. One would never feel that the children were done justice to—it would be constant anxiety and self-reproach."

"Nonsense, Alice," said her sister. "Nobody would torment themselves with such fancies. Of course the children would be a nuisance, and one would be bound to treat them well, but there would be no self-reproach in the matter."

"My dear Alice," said her mother, "you make such romances about everything. I don't know how you will ever go through the world."

"I try to see things as they are, mamma," was Alice's reply.

"That's just what you can't do, my dear ; but I dare say you will in time."

"Tell us about Mr. Desmond's place in Ireland," said Lilian.

"I only remember that it was very ugly and very uncomfortable, and that it rained every day we were there, and the noise of the sea

kept me awake night after night. The people were all tiresome, and some of them had brogues that would terrify one if heard in a civilised country. They had troops of neighbours to meet us—savages that talked of nothing but hunting, women that kept beagles and rode steeple-chases, Catholic priests and Protestant old women that couldn't be asked to dinner on the same day."

"Why not?" asked Alice.

"I never could understand," was the reply. "I believe the old women were the objectors; but it was nothing to me. I thought them all equally disagreeable—I mean the guests—for the people of the house were harmless enough; only they took me out driving across a bog, in an Irish car, to see a round tower."

"Was it very curious?" asked Alice.

"They all said it was, and declared it was either higher, or larger, or more complete than any other in Ireland; and they were as proud of it as if it was the counterpart of Tintern Abbey. But Irish people are always proud of

any useless old thing, which they believe to be a relic of former splendour."

Alice said it was very natural, and Lilian remarked that Ireland must be a very disagreeable country to live in, in which her mother cordially agreed.

Alice went to the window to remove her easel, on which the sun was now shining.

"Pull down the blind, Alice," said Mrs. Clinton. "How bright the sun is this afternoon! One would almost think it was April. I wish it was."

"So do I, mamma," said Lilian. "We shall be in London then."

"We must go next month—in about a fortnight, I think. Alice, you must write tomorrow to Mrs. Smith, and tell her to get the house put to rights, and hurry the upholsterers. The new carpets ought to be down by this time, and we must get some one to choose a piano for us."

"Wilfred could do that," said Alice.

"Poor Wilfred! he would do anything for

us—for you, Lilian, I ought to say,” was Mrs. Clinton’s remark. “If you will play and sing to him, he will be quite rewarded for the trouble, and the half-hour he would have to spare from the back streets and beggars’ dens. You can write and ask him to choose the piano—certainly no one can do it better. There are a great many other things to be done. You must go out of mourning, and get a quantity of new things. I must speak to Laurette about your clothes this minute.”

“This minute, mamma!” exclaimed Alice. “Surely there is no hurry. Will it not be time enough when we go to London?”

“My dear Alice, how indolent you are! I wonder you are not dying of impatience to commence preparations. You never seem to care for anything like other people. When it occurs to me that something should be done, I always set about it instantly. That’s the proper energetic way of going through the world.”

Lilian’s silvery laugh was the only answer to

this speech, and Mrs. Clinton's energy did not allow her to wait for a further reply. She left the room to ransack her daughters' wardrobes, and drive Laurette to distraction with impossible suggestions and contradictory orders.

"Lilian," said Alice, when the sisters were left alone, "had you not better let mamma write to Wilfred about the piano? — or shall I?"

"What strange fancies you have," was the reply. "Why do you always object to my writing to Wilfred, or even talking to him? May we not be friends with our cousins?"

"Yes," said Alice; "and I don't understand the world, and very likely I am quite wrong; but, Lilian, you will let me say what I think. I know that Wilfred is always in earnest about everything; and you can see as well as I do that he feels more than friendship for you. He treasures up your notes and everything of yours, and it is plain that your society is his greatest happiness."

"Very likely," said Lilian. "But why

should I be cross to him because he likes me—admires me, if you choose to call it so. I like him too. I should miss him very much if he were to leave off visiting us. Where is the harm of giving him another note to treasure up? It can't lead to anything."

"It can lead to Wilfred's misery," said Alice, her musical voice rising to a half-indignant tone, "it can lead to your own bitter sorrow, Lilian, unless you can look coolly on the suffering you have caused—unless you can triumph in having won and broken the truest and gentlest heart that ever committed itself to another's keeping—unless—"

"Stop, stop! come down from the clouds, Alice, and don't waste any more eloquence. I am not dreaming of breaking any one's heart. I am not doing the smallest harm to Wilfred or any one else. You don't know anything about those sort of things. You are very good, and very kind to be so concerned about it, dear Alice; but really you are too fanciful, making

such a terrific volcano out of my innocent molehill of a flirtation."

"Well, dear Lilian, I won't say any more, and you must know better than I do what Wilfred's feelings are. But I do hope you will not encourage him in an affection you do not mean to requite. He is not made for disappointment. Perhaps I may be fanciful, and I don't understand those subjects."

"We neither of us know the world," said Lilian, "but we shall begin to learn very soon! Will it not be delightful, Alice? Mamma tells us such charming tales of balls, operas, breakfasts, rides in the park, and all sorts of things."

"I shall like the Opera," observed Alice, "and the exhibitions, and perhaps the other things too. But I look forward most to the music and pictures."

"They will be delightful," said Lilian, "but I do not look forward to them *most*. I mean to improve myself very much both in music and drawing, and the concerts and exhibitions

will help me. But how very odd you are, Alice ; so enthusiastic about the arts, and scarcely ever cultivating them in yourself. You might play as well as I do, if you practised ; and you certainly can sing. As for drawing, we all know you can *begin* pictures."

"Which you can finish," said Alice, with a smile. "It is more pain than pleasure to me, to attempt where I cannot excel. I can listen to you, Lilian, and to Wilfred, and admire your drawings. But why should I torment myself with the sights and sounds of my own unfortunate efforts? I am aware of a perfection which I can never reach ; and it is so distant, so unattainable, that I shrink from the attempt. In music especially I feel this."

"But you like my music, and I am sure it is far enough from your unattainable perfection ; besides, there would be no music in the world if every one thought like you."

"I should be very sorry if they did," said Alice, "and extremely sorry you should adopt

my ideas ; for I do like your music, so does every one who hears it, but no one more than I do. It is very inconsistent, and I cannot account for it, but I am not hard to please. I lose sight of my ideal when contemplating the works of others or listening to their music ; but it comes back again in all its inaccessible beauty when I attempt anything of my own."

"You are an incomprehensible being, Alice. Mamma often says she does not know how you will go through the world ; and I don't wonder at her being in doubt. You do not seem to think like other people, and you mix up your wild fancies with the commonest things. Why can't you take things as they come, and do what other people do—play, and draw, and sing, as well as you can, and amuse yourself and us?"

"You will laugh at me, Lilian, but I never can feel as if those arts were only meant to amuse, and I know the effect they have upon me is quite unlike being amused. I must be very stupid, for I can't bear caricatures or comic

songs, just because they seem to me to insult music and painting by employing them to create mirth alone. It makes me quite uncomfortable."

"I fear, my dear Alice, that you must continually be uncomfortable, for the very things that please and amuse every one else, seem in some way or another to cause you mysterious annoyances."

"Oh no, Lilian," cried Alice, "they give me the greatest possible pleasure in general, more than I can express, it only annoys me to see them misused; and as for being uncomfortable, I don't see that one can possibly avoid it, if one ever thinks."

"Then don't think," was Lilian's advice; and before Alice could state the impossibility of following it, the door was opened by Mrs. Clinton, who eagerly summoned her daughters to join in the interesting occupation then going on up-stairs, and give their approval to the many and complicated sumptuary laws she was about to pass for Laurette's execution. Lilian's taste

would be required by her mother, and poor Laurette would be glad of Alice's elucidation of the confused directions she had just received from her mistress.

CHAPTER V.

As she turned her face in going, thus, she drew me on
to love her,
And to worship the divineness of the smile hid in her
eyes.

MRS. BROWNING.

THE long-expected "first week in March" arrived, and its last day saw Mrs. Clinton and her daughters established among the new and luxurious furniture of their house in Belgrave Square. Lilian and her mother were both in the highest spirits, and Alice was excited at the change, and full of dreams and conjectures as to the future, mingled with a kind of regretful clinging to her past days of seclusion and peace.

But on this Saturday afternoon her mind was filled with eager anticipations of the evening's pleasure. They were to go to the Opera—to that scene of enchantment of which Alice had dreamt till she almost felt that it could be no novelty. She was going to hear to perfection the music that had long been familiar to her, and to see the dramatic impersonation of the ideas it had suggested. She looked forward to all this with a delight that gave her mother the greatest satisfaction, and made that anxious parent pronounce that Alice, after all, was quite as glad to "go out" as any other girl would be.

The expected hour came at last. It would be vain to describe Alice's delight, as she saw and heard the realizations of her visions; and it were needless to record Lilian's expressions of pleasure, or Mrs. Clinton's joy at recognising friends, acquaintances, and objects of future introductions in all parts of the house. She could not be silent for ten minutes together—even when the spell of the music fell most

overpoweringly on the breathless multitude, her praises of the singer were not wholly inaudible, except to Alice, who was entranced, hearing and seeing nothing of her companions, who had the kindness not to address any of their remarks to her.

The curtain fell at the close of the first act, and Alice awoke to consciousness—first—of blank silence ; next, of voices and laughter ; then, of the following words :

“ Alice ! have you no eyes, no ears, but for that fictitious Lucia ? You may forget her for the present : she is eating and drinking to fortify herself for the representation of despair in the following acts. I’ve been here for the last quarter of an hour—will you be so kind as to become aware of me ?”

“ Frederick !” said Alice, in surprise, “ I did not see you. I beg your pardon. Will the second act begin soon ?”

“ I hope not,” replied her cousin, “ for then you will relapse into your former alarming stat

of unconsciousness ; and I want to talk to you, though I see that the wish is not mutual."

Alice smiled, and tried to apologise for her pre-occupied state, assuring her cousin that she was very glad to see him and quite ready to talk.

"Well," he said, "I must congratulate you—and society in general—on your first appearance. I included you in an eloquent address to that effect which I made to my aunt during your mesmeric state."

"It was lost upon her," said Mrs. Clinton, with a laugh, "and I don't think she has once looked round the house."

"I was looking at the stage, mamma," was Alice's innocent reply. "I thought every one was looking at it too."

Her mother and Frederick both laughed, to Alice's great surprise, and Frederick said :

"You will soon learn that the stage is by no means the only attraction, or even the greatest one, to half the people who come here. Is

there nothing worth seeing in the boxes? In *this* one there certainly is."

"The party opposite seem to think so," said Lilian: "they are looking at us. Do you know who they are?"

"The lady with the marabout feathers is Lady Greville," said Mrs. Clinton. "I know her, she gives a ball every week—not good ones though. The girl with the blue roses is her daughter; she had crimson violets the year before last. This must be her fifth season at least. Do you know who that man is, Frederick, who is talking to her?"

"That is Lord Rossendale," he replied, "a great *parti*. Lady Greville is doing her best to secure him, but it will not be easy."

"Lord Rossendale?" said Mrs. Clinton. "He is new, is he not?"

"New to us, for he has been abroad the last six years—you might remember him as Mr. St. Quintin—he appeared for one season, and then vanished. Now he has returned, and the

world has welcomed him. He is an enviable fellow."

"Why?" said Alice; and Lilian looked at him with curiosity.

"Why!" answered Frederick, "because he is immensely rich, and has a magnificent estate, and no brothers; and all the mothers, and half the daughters in London are at his feet!"

"Nonsense, Fred," said Mrs. Clinton, "you do not know him, do you?"

"Lady Greville does," was the reply; "she will introduce him to you."

"I was not thinking of introductions," said Mrs. Clinton, feeling herself detected. "I have no curiosity about him."

"But I have," said Lilian. "He looks clever."

"He looks cross," said Alice.

"Not now, surely," exclaimed Frederick.

He did look clever, as Lilian had observed; and Alice was not far wrong when she detected his slightly ill-tempered expression. Frederick was right too, for that expression vanished as

his eye wandered towards Mrs. Clinton's box, and was arrested for a moment by Lilian's fresh and radiant beauty.

"You will know him soon, Aunt Clinton," said her nephew, in an oracular tone. The welcome prophecy was scarcely needed. Mrs. Clinton's sagacity had anticipated it.

The curtain rose. Alice was again entranced ; and when the third act came, she was no longer singular in her rapt attention, for the power of that mournful music had at length chained the spirits of the gay multitude, and there were few who were not touched by the dying accents of the feigned Edgardo. When Alice heard his last passionate address to the winged spirit of her whose sufferings had set that spirit free, she felt the shadow of that despair which his wild song expressed fall coldly on her heart, and her pale cheek grew paler as she listened.

They did not wait for the ballet—Mrs. Clinton would allow no late hours, no exertion till her daughters had fairly "appeared." They were to do so at a dinner-party and two balls on

Tuesday, and till then nothing was to be allowed that could impair the freshness of their looks.

There is no need to weary the reader by forcing him to accompany our friends to the many scenes of gaiety where they were nightly to be found. Let him draw upon his own recollections, if on the canvas of his memory such scenes are painted ; and if he be one to whom they have ever been unknown, I would ask him to believe my assurance, that he would derive little pleasure, and still less profit, from my description of them.

In a few days the " Clinton group " was no longer admired as a novelty, but followed as a known and valued addition to many circles in that vast sphere of society. The mother was universally liked and cordially welcomed by many old acquaintances, and she was also an object of great admiration to nearly a dozen school-boy guardsmen, and twice as many new-made ensigns, to whom her matronly beauty, and good-natured, half-protecting manner, were

more irresistible than even Lilian's superior charms.

These were, however, fully appreciated by the world, and Lilian became the object of almost universal admiration. The atmosphere she breathed was heavy with the intoxicating incense of the world's applause, and flattery in all its forms was rapidly becoming her daily food. Little did those who gave it care that it was poison; not quick, nor fatal, perhaps, but poison still, the sweetest that ever ruined a spirit's health. For if a young and thoughtless mind like Lilian's ever recoiled from flattery, it was because those who administered it knew not how to prepare the ambrosial feast. It was to the delicate, refined flattery of society in its worldly perfection that Lilian was exposed—to that praise which flows from real, though short-lived enthusiasm, and which is expressed in language apparently meant to conceal more than it conveys—that sweet, enchanting tribute which by turns assumes the form of sympathy, latent affection, even esteem and exalted admi-

ration—twining its serpent form in changeful beauty over the young heart's garden, and withering many a bud of promise, blighting many a fair fruit in the Eden to which its fraud had gained it access.

The world was at Lilian's feet. Her beauty had first attracted its suffrages, and her talents won from it a higher tribute. Those few who had looked unmoved on her graceful form and faultless features, were touched or dazzled by the spell of her marvellous voice and her many gifts, and excellence in the arts; and even those (if any there were) for whom music and painting had no charm, were drawn to her side, and kept there, regardless of passing time, by the fascination of her manner and the higher attraction of her conversation; for the clear and sparkling current of her words flowed with an ever-varying beauty, revealing while it seemed to hide the treasures of the well-stored mind that lay beneath.

She was indeed formed to be the idol of society, to be raised on a pedestal of golden

opinions, but not to receive unmoved the tribute of her worshippers—not to stand without dizziness on that “bad eminence.”

She was happy beyond her brightest hopes during that enchanted time. The Circean cup was raised to her lips, and she inhaled with delirious pleasure its rich fragrance, till in heart and brain its unfelt influence began to work.

Her less gifted sister scarcely less enjoyed the pleasures of the time and place; but her joys lay deeper, and sprung from a higher source. She too might have revelled in the sunshine of flattery, had it beamed upon her, but she was spared this insidious trial. If Alice was admired, it was only by a few, and her calm demeanour, and reserved manner, were unconscious restraints upon any expressions of admiration. It was a feeling which she was more formed to experience than to excite; and in that social world, bright with so many hues of real and factitious grace and beauty, so many glories of art, so many fascinations of talent

and even genius, Alice found much to admire, and much to enjoy.

And her enjoyment was great. After all her sorrow, all her vague disquietude and hidden sadness, her spirit yielded itself to the influences of surrounding things. The heart of youth is never long closed against joy, and Alice found it in the crowded ball-rooms and gay assemblies, for she was unsophisticated, and sought the beautiful in all things. Nor had she learnt the complaining language of the world's tired votaries, who talk of false enjoyments, tinsel ornament, and vain display. Her spirits rose, (though they never overflowed to the sight of others,) when she found herself amidst those scenes of graceful revelry. She could not be unmoved, uncharmed, while bright forms were flitting round her, in the magic brilliance of the conquered midnight, and while music whose breath was gladness rung in her ears. She was not neglected, indeed she received more attention than many who surpassed her in

common attractions, for the sister of the beautiful Miss Clinton was not to be passed by unnoticed ; and there were many who liked her, for her gentle voice and graceful manner, and were attracted by her thoughtful countenance, and the deep eyes which her soul looked through.

Still, in the midst of Alice's enjoyment, fears would intrude—fears unknown to Lilian, though Alice did not conceal them from her sister. In her quiet moments, few as they were, there was time for thoughts of higher things, dreams of the truly beautiful, longings for the real and only good, and a haunting dread lest she should be turned from these objects to the pursuit of their too attractive shadows ; and then would come the vain wish, painful in its intensity, for some stronger spirit on which to lean ; some mind to whose protecting wings her own might cling for guidance through this fair maze, so sweet, yet so perplexing to her unsupported nature ; and amid her fears would rise the memory of her lost father, till regret

forced itself anew upon her heart with something of its first bitterness.

Three weeks had passed. On a rainy afternoon the two sisters were sitting together in the back drawing-room, which was appropriated to their use. Lilian was lamenting over the weather, which had deprived her of a ride in the park, and of many hoped-for visitors. Alice was trying to read and at the same time answer her sister's frequent ejaculations of disappointment and *ennui*, but she soon abandoned the former attempt, and devoted herself to the latter employment.

"Will you sing for me, Lilian?" she said, "it will pass the time pleasantly, and keep you in practice."

"I don't want practice," was the reply, "and I shall have singing enough this evening. I wonder if Wilfred will call."

"In all this rain, Lilian?" said Alice, with a smile; "besides, he was here yesterday."

"You don't wish him to come, I think. I

should have thought you would have enjoyed his wise conversation beyond everything."

"I do enjoy his conversation; but, Lilian, how can I wish him to come? it would only add to the sufferings that are awaiting him."

"Poor Wilfred," said Lilian, with half a sigh, "how can I help being kind to him? it is not my fault if it makes him fancy that he cares about me. Now don't speak, Alice. I know what you are going to say, that Wilfred is always in earnest, and that I am doing him all sorts of harm; but depend upon it, Wilfred is like other people, and will not be at all the worse for anything I can do; besides, I like him a great deal better than most people. Don't talk any more about it. Can't you tell me something pleasant? You will have time to go on with your book this evening, when mamma and I are dining at Lady Greville's."

"I hope that will be pleasant," said Alice. "I shall be half-asleep when you return."

"But you will wake up for the ball. I shall

be half-asleep too, all dinner-time. Dinners are not amusing.”

“It depends who you sit next,” was Alice’s sage remark.

“It does, indeed; and Lady Greville will give me to one of her tiresome nephews—she has half-a-dozen whom she is pushing and helping through the world. By the bye, Alice, I shall meet a friend of yours. Shall I give you up my place, and tell mamma to take you?”

“What would then become of Lady Greville’s concert?” said Alice. She had suddenly taken up her book again, and was leaning over its open pages.

“Never mind the concert. If there was none, would you go in my place?”

“No,” said Alice, without looking up from the book, in which she had apparently found an interesting passage.

“No? and yet you like dinner-parties better than I do. And, Alice, I thought you liked Sir Aubrey Howard.”

“I liked him at first,” replied Alice; “I like him still, only—”

“Only you have found out what others have already discovered—that he likes you.”

“I hope not,” said Alice; “at least, not in the sense you mean—that is, I hope I shall never know it if he does, because—because it would never do. But there is no danger: only I would not run the risk of encouraging him to fancy he liked me. He might do that—perhaps—”

Lilian laughed. “Your speech is too misty for your meaning to be seen through it,” she said. “What would never do? what is there no danger of? what do you hope you will never know?”

Alice was extricated from the difficulty of answering these categorical questions; for at this moment a footstep was heard on the stairs, and Wilfred entered unannounced, as was his wont.

He was cordially greeted by both his cousins, and Lilian’s first words were:

"You never were more welcome, Wilfred ; I was beginning to give up all hopes of visitors this wet day."

"It is not very wet," said Wilfred ; "at least, I did not feel the rain ; and if I had, your welcome is worth a wetting. I may stay half-an-hour, may I not ? there can neither be drives or rides in contemplation such a day as this ?"

"No, indeed," said Lilian, "and you may stay till you are as tired of us as we were of ourselves a minute ago."

"Tired of yourselves ! tired of last night's ball, you mean—tired of being talked to, danced with, admired. It must either tire you or spoil you, Lilian ; and you will not be spoilt—"

"I hope you are mistaken, Wilfred," interrupted Alice ; "for I don't think either of us are tired of going out, and I would rather not believe the alternative with which you are frightening us."

"Not frightening *me*," said Lilian : "I am not the least afraid. I enjoy myself perfectly without any fears."

Wilfred sighed. It was plain that he did not participate in his cousin's unmixed enjoyment.

"You seem both to like going out," he said.

"Of course we do!" was Lilian's exclamation. "Everybody must like it. Why should we not? I hope you are not getting like Barbara, Wilfred, telling us that everything pleasant is wrong. You look as if you were adopting that principle."

"No," said Wilfred, "it is a false one, which you could not repudiate more strongly than I do. Pleasure is not wrong; but it may be dangerous, and you are exposed to it in its most dangerous form. But you are safe—I could not doubt it, Lilian. You will both be safe in all the world's dangers and temptations."

"Safe! of course we know how to take care of ourselves, and behave wisely and discreetly, and not grow conceited. Besides, Wilfred, you will come and preach to us sometimes, and give us wholesome warnings and grave lectures.

We cannot be much the worse for our dissipation when a clergyman visits us nearly every day."

Wilfred looked at his cousin with a sad smile, and said :

"If I could be a safeguard—if my influence, my words, could avail for your protection, then, indeed, life would have an object—"

Lilian looked down ; her bright head averted from Wilfred's earnest glance. But he saw the heightened colour of her cheek, as she turned it from him, and felt that he was understood. Hope, from that moment, entered into his heart. He saw not Alice's quick glance of compassion, and felt almost irritated when she turned the current of his rapid thoughts by saying :

"Do you mean to retain your present curacy very long ?"

"Until I get a living," he answered, "I do not wish to change. There is a most engrossing interest in my present occupation, though it is of a most painful nature. You cannot imagine

the fearful scenes of distress, misery and vice, which I witness almost daily."

"And all this in the very scene of our pleasures," said Alice—"this London, where we only live to enjoy ourselves. It is well to be reminded of the sufferings that hide beyond our sight."

"I wish we could do them some good," said Lilian. "But it is very disagreeable to hear of such things. How good of you, Wilfred, to go among them so much."

"It is my duty," was the reply; "and I have my reward in finding that some little good is done, though I meet with many discouragements, and even repulses occasionally. The painful feeling arises from the impossibility of relieving the physical wants of those overcrowded, half-starved families. But still, something can be done, and there is not much to complain of as to want of charity among the rich, as far as alms-giving is meant. I have been able to relieve some severe distress

by means of the donations of others, and you and Alice have helped me very much."

"There is some satisfaction in that," said Alice. "I feel sometimes as if we were of no use to any one."

"We can't always be of use," said Lilian; "but we amuse people, and please them too sometimes."

"Always," said Wilfred. "Will you please me now, Lilian, and sing something?"

"I have a new song," she answered; "quite a trifling one—neither words nor music are worth much. But it would please most people—not you, I fear, Wilfred. You must tell me whether you despise it."

Lilian went to the piano, and without further prelude began:

"Oh! say not that pleasure is transient and brief,
That the sunshine of life is fast fading away.
Oh! let me not hear of the shadow of grief
Which the future may cast. I'll be blithe while I
may!

“Why should I dream of the woes I must bear ?

Why trace the dark thread in the cord of my lot ?

I'll banish each vision of sorrow and care,

And let the world's future be ever forgot !

“There's a halo of brightness around me this hour,

Let me dream that no shade on its beauty is cast ;

Though a cloud on my distant horizon may lour,

I'll forget that my joy is too perfect to last !”

She stopped, and turned quickly round with a bright smile, which accorded well with the spirit of her song. Wilfred's looks expressed the admiration he could not but feel for her talent and her beauty ; but his words were not of praise.

“It is what people might call pretty,” he said ; “but surely, Lilian, you don't approve of the sentiment ?”

“Of course I don't,” she answered. “The idea of approving of all the extraordinary sentiments one has to sing about !”

“I can't make her agree with me,” said Alice. “I always feel as if music, and poetry too, were the native language of strong and

real feeling ; and it seems a perversion of them to make them express what one does not feel and cannot sympathise with."

" Well," said Lilian, " here's another which I neither feel nor sympathise with, but which you, Alice, will certainly admire. Now, Wilfred, this is a great favour. I scarcely ever sing this—it is so dismal—it almost chokes me ; though of course I don't really sympathise. Listen."

She struck a few chords in a low minor key ; then, after a wailing arpeggio, and a few notes suggestive of the sad melody, she began, in a tone that could scarcely be heard without emotion :

" The sky is heavy and dark,
Drearly falls the rain :
But the sun will shine out to-morrow,
And the sky will be clear again !

" My heart is heavy and dark,
My tears fall like winter rain ;
No sunshine for me to-morrow—
It will never be bright again !

- “The billows lash the shore
With a restless sound of woe,
But to-morrow a gentle music
May rise from their measured flow.
- “I have a sea within,
My heart is its battered shore ;
And I know that the storm in its billows
Will rage for evermore !
- “Nature is full of hope,
But the hope of my soul is dead !
Nature may veil her brightness,
But the light of my life has fled !
- “Alas ! for the spirit’s youth
That is gone, while life is young !
Alas ! for the pure, glad freshness
Whose untimely knell is rung !
- “Mourn for the fallen ! Oh, mourn
For the plant in its spring-time faded !
Mourn for the gladness that’s past away,
The brightness for ever shaded !
- “Lament, with despair’s low wail,
For the weary and desolate one !
Oh ! why should existence linger
When the life of the heart is gone !”

CHAPTER VI.

And I said : “ My cousin Amy, speak, and speak the truth to me :

Trust me, cousin, all the current of my being sets to thee.”

TENNYSON.

WHEN Wilfred went home to his solitary lodging, Lilian's voice was still singing in his heart. Heedless of the still falling rain, he walked on, listening in spirit to that echo. Her last mournful melody had a haunting power, a spell he could not shake off ; and the last words still sounded in his ears : “ the life of the heart is gone.” He felt that Lilian's love would be *that* life to him, could he but gain it ;

and he felt, also, that he could no longer bear suspense. His hopes had risen to a height they had never before attained ; but as hope grew strong, uncertainty became intolerable. He quickened his steps, as people do when restless thought is the sole companion of their walk, and soon reached the quiet street and equally quiet house which formed his present home.

His little sitting-room had never seemed so gloomy before, as it did in that dull London twilight. The black horsehair sofa looked almost funereal ; and the open books, confused heaps of manuscript and unwiped pens that lay upon the table, conveyed to him a feeling of solitude—almost of sadness. He had been hours from home, and no kind hand had brought order and comfort to his apartment. We must confess that his discontent was somewhat unreasonable, for he had himself not long before requested his officious servant always “to leave things as he found them ;” but at this moment Wilfred could only feel that

it would be happiness to know there was one who *could* harmonise all these scattered objects, and “rule his house” in the beauty of order.

There *was* such a one. Might he hope that *she* would come, and make all around him bright, and all within him peaceful?

He threw himself on the hard, black sofa, and began to think—for he *could* think. Even now, when love was reigning in his heart and brain, it could not disorganise his mind, so well disciplined from childhood, nor force him to exchange reflection for reverie, and thoughts for dreams. He was engrossed, absorbed in one subject—he could not have given a moment’s attention to another. But on that one subject he was resolved to think clearly, calmly, and disinterestedly. He did so.

He could not recal a period when Lilian was not beloved. In his schoolboy days, the image of that beautiful child had haunted his dreams, and flitted before his spirit’s eyes while he bent over the dull page, or joined his companions at their sports. She was then his ideal of beauty

and grace ; and it was to her society that he looked forward with greatest eagerness as the holidays approached. As he grew to man's estate, his boyish love grew with him, and strengthened with his strength. Lilian was unlike him in character, unlike him in disposition, and turn of mind ; but this very difference strengthened his affection. Her gay demeanour, her joyous aspect, and her constant flow of spirits and brilliant conversation had all tended to endear her, contradictory as it may seem, to his calmer, and perhaps less cheerful nature. Her generosity and good-nature were to him proofs of a noble and unselfish disposition ; her excellence in the arts he took for genius ; and her radiant beauty spoke to his heart, and made him believe it was but the type of the more beautiful soul within. Thus day by day this love had grown upon him, till it had become a portion of his being. But he was not one of those whose love binds them to earth ; and tender as was his conscience, he knew that his affection for Lilian need be no

bar to his devoting himself peculiarly to the service of religion; and he almost felt as though that affection had become a hallowed thing, when he bore it in his heart from the altar before which his ordination vows had been pronounced.

And was it to be crushed—this beautiful and tender plant, the growth of a life-time? He could not think so. He remembered a thousand traits of Lilian's childish kindness—her joy at meeting him, her impetuous tears at his departure; and in later days, her constant kindness, her cordial meetings, her evident interest in his pursuits, her readiness to please him by her talents. He remembered, too, that all this was unchanged—that now, while the world was at her feet, she was the same to him—her kind words and kinder looks were his still, though coveted by those far above him in all that the world holds dear. He had resolved that Lilian should remain ignorant of his feelings till after the end of this season—he would not steal upon her heart till it had learnt

to form its choice. He trembled at the thought of Lilian's entrance into society, for he knew that her affection would probably be sought by others more worthy of it than himself, and also by those whose love would neither tend to her welfare or her happiness. This thought was a terror that for a time was never absent from his mind ; but he felt it less, now that he had watched her through a part of the trying period, and found her unchanged.

And now he determined to shorten his self-imposed probation, and at once to ascertain his fate. If, as he dared to hope, his affection was returned, it would be darkening Lilian's happiness to defer the expression of his hopes ; and he could not "bring a cloud upon the summer's day of one so happy and so beautiful."

Wilfred had never learned to look on anything in a worldly light. It may be a necessary lesson, but few can imagine how difficult, to an imaginative nature. For imagination sees all things in their highest bearings, and throws the

intense sunlight of pure truth upon the matter it contemplates; it cannot force itself to look through the stained and distorted glass of opinion or conventionality.

So it was with Wilfred. He knew that he loved Lilian; he knew that if she loved him, he could make her happy; he also knew that he could give her all the necessities and some of the luxuries of life. He never even thought that it was hard to expect that she, the world's favourite, would become a curate's wife; he could not see that to assume such a position could be a sacrifice—could be anything, in short, but a tenfold increase of happiness to Lilian as to himself, if she felt towards him as he hoped she did.

He resolved that the next day should end his suspense. It came, and the hour of noon found him at his aunt's house. There was nothing unusual in his early visit, for he used to spend much of his leisure time with his aunt and cousins, particularly when his own family was not in London; and it must be remem-

bered that from childhood he had been the companion of his cousins, and almost as a son to their parents. Mrs. Clinton was much too thoughtless, and too much accustomed to Wilfred's society to fear that consequences might arise from this intimacy injurious to the peace of any of the three young people; and if such ideas were suggested, she only laughed and said that Wilfred was the brother of her children, and would never dream of a nearer tie.

On the morning in question, Mrs. Clinton and her daughters were engaged in the usual occupations of a London forenoon, when that time is not spent in sleep. She was looking over her engagement book, throwing aside notes of invitation, grumbling at the tardy arrival of expected dressmakers, and giving Alice directions for the composition of innumerable notes and letters, which poor Alice was endeavouring to indite as her mother's secretary.

Fortune was strangely favourable to Wilfred's

plans, for Mrs. Clinton's first words, after the accustomed greeting, were these :

"Alice and I are as busy as possible this morning, Wilfred, and I am afraid you can't help us. But Lilian is in the next room, drawing ; you might help *her*, and she will be delighted to see you."

Wilfred's hopes were strengthened, even by these careless words. He thanked his aunt in somewhat confused language, for allowing him to remain while she was so much occupied, and disappeared into the adjoining room.

Alice looked anxiously after his retreating form, and dropped her pen.

"What are you thinking of, Alice? Go on—finish that note, and then follow him if you like."

These words recalled her to a consciousness of her mother's presence and her own occupation. She finished the note.

"Thank you, my dear," said her mother. "Now, don't run off to Lilian and her pictures. I want to talk to you. You did not say a word

to Sir Aubrey Howard all through a quadrille yesterday night. I saw you. You walked through the dance as if it was a funeral measure. And you never spoke to your partner—one of the most agreeable people in the room. Don't you think so, Alice?"

"He is very agreeable," said Alice, arranging all the pens in a row. "But indeed, mamma, I did talk; at least, I thought I did."

"You should try and be sociable, my dear," said her mother. "And I know that Sir Aubrey likes you, and thinks you remarkably pleasing—there's nothing to be ashamed of, Alice; you need not hang down your head like a child—and I have a high opinion of him. So I wish, when he dances with you, that you would not be quite so stiff. Lilian sat next him at dinner yesterday, but he did not dance with her, I think?"

"No," said Alice, "he does not dance much; he says he does not care about it."

"Oh!" said Mrs. Clinton, "then he told you what his tastes were?"

“He told me some of them,” replied Alice.

Mrs. Clinton observed her increasing confusion, and augured from it the realisation of her own new-born hope. A gleam of pleasure lighted up her countenance at the thought of Alice’s success; but she prudently quitted the subject of Sir Aubrey’s attentions, and turned her thoughts to the achievements of her eldest daughter.

“Did you not think Lilian looked tired this morning?” she said. “I must not let her dance so much: she will lose her fresh looks.”

“She did not complain of being tired, mamma,” said Alice; “but I thought she must be, after so many dances, and I persuaded her to go bed without talking to me. I have heard nothing yet about your dinner-party. Did Lilian sing much in the evening?”

“Oh yes,” answered Mrs. Clinton, “and you cannot think how much admired she was. Lord Rossendale scarcely left her side for a moment, and stood turning over the leaves the whole time she was singing. I wish you could

have seen his face when she left the piano, and that plain Miss Greville sat down to play. Poor thing ! she must have been quite vexed. I could hardly help laughing—he turned away so abruptly to follow Lilian to her seat. And Lady Greville's frowns, my dear ! Oh ! it was too amusing !”

“ I always thought Lord Rossendale looked cross. Do you remember, mamma, that night at the Opera I said so ?”

“ Cross, my dear Alice ! he has a fine expressive countenance, and does not look perpetually pleased with himself like that silly Captain Travers that Frederick is so fond of. I think Lord Rossendale is quite charming, and his manner and appearance perfect—so original without being singular, and so perfectly natural !”

“ Yes,” said Alice, “ I like that in him—he is quite without affectation.”

“ And so many people remarked,” continued the eager parent, “ that his attention to Lilian

was quite extraordinary for him ; and she seemed to like it."

"She likes him very much, I think," said Alice.

Mrs. Clinton's countenance was again irradiated. Her hope for Lilian was slightly confirmed. It was a week older than the one of which Alice was the unconscious object. She was about to endeavour to ascertain some more of Lilian's opinions regarding Lord Rossendale, when the expected dressmaker was announced. This caused a total revulsion of thought ; and Mrs. Clinton hastily left the room, to enjoy in her own apartment the inspection of the contents of a wicker box now on its way up-stairs.

Alice was left alone. She sat immoveable, and apparently lost in thought for a few moments, and then rose and went towards the folding-doors which separated her from Wilfred and Lilian. For a moment she hesitated, her hand upon the door. It was but a moment, and she entered the room. Her

sister's back was towards her, and Wilfred was standing near, and leaning upon the mantel-piece.

He started as his cousin entered, and suddenly seizing her hand, with the half-inaudible words, "Good-bye, Alice," left the room, and ran down-stairs.

Alice turned in consternation to her sister; but Lilian had thrown herself down on the sofa upon which she had been sitting, and lay there, her face buried in the pillows, while her whole frame shook with convulsive grief.

Alice asked no explanation—she needed none. Gently disengaging the hand which had buried itself among Lilian's disordered ringlets and twined them among its clenched fingers, she sat down silently beside her sister, that burning hand in hers, and waited till the storm of emotion should pass over. It was violent and short; and before many moments had elapsed, Lilian was calm enough to give an account, incoherent indeed, of what had passed. Alice's fears were all confirmed.

“We must try and forget him—forget all that passed to-day; it was most painful, but it is over now.”

With these words, Lilian concluded the conversation, in which she told her sister the tale of Wilfred’s blighted love: “It is over now.” She did not mean that Wilfred’s happiness was over, that the one hope on which he had lived from childhood was over, that all the beauty and gladness of his young life was over. She would hardly have spoken so calmly if she meant *this*; she would have given more than one burst of short-lived grief to the ruin she had caused, had she thought of *this*.

“It is over,” she said; and so it was, over for her; her dream was ended: the bitter triumph of her vanity was ended; and if she felt regret, whose strength was akin to remorse, that must end too. “We must forget it,” she said, and she did her best to procure the desired oblivion; and not in vain, though for a few days it was remarked that Miss Clinton’s radiant countenance was somewhat obscured, and the

flow of her gay and brilliant conversation had grown uneven. In her home too, she was changed, though the change was short-lived. For a few days her piano was untouched, her easel stood undisturbed in the corner, and she seemed listless and unoccupied. She missed Wilfred's companionship; she missed still more the excitement of his presence, for it *had* been an excitement, though she had deceived herself into the belief that it was none. No woman can remain totally unmoved in the presence of one who loves her with such a love as Wilfred's; though she may not return his affection, may even be rationally unconscious of it, still it exercises an exciting influence, mesmeric perhaps, and irresistible; strong enough, too, to produce a dreary time of reaction when the excitement ceases.

So it was with Lilian. For a week she was *ennuyée*, the next, she had found a new excitement, and the past was forgotten.

CHAPTER VII.

You see how simple and how fond I am.

SHAKSPERE.

WHEN Mrs. Clinton heard what had passed between her daughter and Wilfred, she was at first indignant at her nephew's presumption ; and then pitied him for the disappointment which, after all, she said, he brought upon himself. She did not blame Lilian in the slightest degree, but Alice was sharply rebuked for not having seen and averted the unpleasant event, before it had actually occurred.

“You should have warned me, Alice,” said her mother ; “you were a third party, uncon-

cerned in the matter, and you might have prevented all this. If it was any one but Wilfred, it would not have signified so much ; but now he never can come here again, and what would your poor father say if he knew that Wilfred could be one of us no longer ?”

These were bitter words to poor Alice, for she had often asked herself the same question. The memory of her father never left her mind, and now it was more sadly felt when she thought of the estrangement that would take place between his children and the son of his adoption. It was hard that her own mother should charge her with “unconcern,” in a matter where she felt so deeply ; but Alice did not expect to be understood, and silently endured the false accusation.

Mrs. Clinton could not refrain from relating the whole story in the first letter she wrote to her sister, Mrs. Lynne, after Wilfred’s last unfortunate visit. Mrs. Clinton was what is called an excellent correspondent, and was in the habit of furnishing her more simple-minded

sister with weekly narratives of small and great events of public and private interest, and many of no interest at all, except to Mrs. Lynne, who, like most women of low intellectual powers, was fond of detail in proportion to its microscopic minuteness.

It was a great amusement, a sort of recreation for idle mornings, to write these long rambling letters ; and it was a safety valve as well, and an easy way of getting rid of any superabundance of good or bad temper, high or low spirits ; and Mrs. Clinton's temper and spirits were as constant, but not as regular, in their ebb and flow, as the tides of the sea. These letters were invaluable to Mrs. Lynne, living, as she did, in a house where no other light literature was admitted. She read them twenty times with undiminished interest, and finally consigned them to the depths of a vast pocket, after she had read select extracts to her husband and daughter, neither of whom were ever allowed a glance at the precious documents.

At the particular period of which we speak, intelligence from Mrs. Clinton was doubly interesting: for while Mrs. Lynne deprecated the worldly amusements in which her sister and nieces were so much engaged, she was always anxious to hear descriptions of those amusements, and details of the incidents that took place in scenes so little known to her. Though the Lynnes visited London every year, and generally took a house there for two months in the spring, society, in the usual sense of the word, gained nothing by their presence. Mr. Lynne was connected with several religious and political societies, of which a few were useful, many harmless, and some neither one or the other; be this as it may, these societies gave him much occupation and much interest; and their periodical spring meetings in Exeter Hall and elsewhere, were the cause of his yearly flight to the metropolis, whither his wife and daughter always accompanied him.

It was now June, and they had returned

home, for they had had a fixed home for years. It does not speak well for their love of nature, and taste for the beautiful, when I reveal the fact, that it was to a glaring white house in Regency Square, Brighton, that Mr. Lynne applied this sacred name. Here they had lived ever since the school days of their youngest son; here had Barbara received the "solid" education which her father so much appreciated, and the accomplishments which her mother admired with such enthusiasm, or rather, with so many enthusiastic expressions; for of this feeling, in its reality, the placid Mrs. Lynne was wholly incapable.

Brighton, then, was the home of the Lynnes, but never did Mrs. Lynne return there with so little pleasure as she did on this occasion. She had enjoyed herself in London to the utmost of her capacity; it was charming to see so much of dear Florence and the girls, to hear such varieties of news, to know all that was passing in the world, and see such pretty dresses tried on. It was delightful; though James

did not seem to find any difference from the year before. But now it was over, and Mrs. Clinton's letters were all that remained, all that she could look to for information on so many interesting subjects, never alluded to in that house except by herself.

On one of those scorching afternoons which form the type of a Brighton summer, Mrs. Lynne sat alone at the drawing-room table, engaged in a vast undertaking—no less than the manufacture of a stair carpet. She held in one hand an immense white grating, of the stiffest canvas, and in the other a powerful needle, drawing a lengthened train of that substance, so unpleasant even to think of in June, called double Berlin wool. The sun was streaming in upon a heap of fiery-looking skeins and balls of the same material, connecting them as it were with the window by a long line of dancing dust.

Mrs. Lynne worked on—it would have made any one hot to look at her—but she seemed quite unconscious of the temperature,

and continued her occupation till it was suddenly checked by a painful discovery.

"Dear me!" she murmured to herself, "I am making a red square, and it ought to be a yellow one! I am forgetting what I am about!" and with a long, heavy sigh the work was pushed aside.

In truth, Mrs. Lynne was forgetting what she was about — was forgetting everything, except the letter that morning received from her sister. It was the announcement of "poor Wilfred's folly," as the writer termed it, and it contained a paragraph almost pathetic, describing Lilian's sorrow at being forced to give him pain, "for, of course," wrote Mrs. Clinton, "the poor child had never dreamt that Wilfred thought of such a thing. She was as much astonished as I was, and it was most unpleasant to her to have such a scene to go through. We all miss Wilfred very much, for his visits are out of the question now. I cannot think how he could ever have been so foolish, and so extremely rash and inconsiderate."

Mrs. Lynne drew the letter from her pocket, and read over the above passage—and many more to the same effect—till she began mentally to blame Wilfred with as much severity as she was capable of. She could not form an opinion of her own on any subject, but always adopted those of others, retaining the one first presented to her mind until some one expressed another, for which she immediately exchanged the opinion formerly adopted, unless, indeed, it had originated with Mr. Lynne or Barbara, in which case it became an *idée fixe*, never to be eradicated or modified.

But Wilfred's conduct had not yet been submitted to their judgment, for they were both out when the post came, so that Mrs. Lynne's unassisted mind could only take her sister's view of the case, and condemn Wilfred as guilty of unpardonable folly. She therefore purposed to send him a maternal rebuke ; and in pursuance of this intention, had sat down to work at her stair carpet while mentally concocting the important epistle, in which reproof, con-

dolence, and advice were to be blended with consummate art. But the double occupation was too much for her simplicity of intellect, and the stair carpet suffered, as we have seen.

For nearly half-an-hour Mrs. Lynne remained seated, lost in thought. The sun streamed into the room with undiminished brightness, but its dusty rays had left the glowing heap of wools, and were now curling up the thin cover of a pamphlet on the Corn-laws so as to display the signature of Barbara Lynne on the first page, written in a large, firm hand, with an uncompromising heaviness about it which was very characteristic of the writer.

At this moment, Mrs. Lynne was startled from her reverie by a knock at the house door—five distinct and equal blows, exactly such a knock as would be struck by the hand which traced the characters I have just described. The sound was followed by that of a quick footstep on the stairs, and in another moment Barbara entered.

“Oh, my dear Barbara!” cried Mrs. Lynne,

with a second start, by which three balls of wool were precipitated from her lap and sent rolling into undiscoverable corners. "My dear Barbara, I want you so very much ! But where's your father ?"

"He left me at the corner of the square, and walked on to Mr. Somers's. I had the key, and came across the square. But what did you want me for, mamma ?"

"Oh, Barbara !" replied her mother, with a deep sigh, diving, as she spoke, into the pocket where lay the memorable letter. "Such a thing has happened ! Just guess what your brother Wilfred has done ! and only think how unpleasant for our dear Lilian, and for your aunt, and, indeed, for Alice too—the foolish, thoughtless, giddy boy ! And he's never to go there again ; and she's quite upset by it—indeed, they all are—and I don't know what I ought to do. I'm going to write to him. It's really very trying ! All I've gone through with my sons, no one can tell."

Barbara was accustomed to her mother's

peculiar style of narration, and could generally untwine the tangled skein of her words; but this time she failed.

“Frederick, you mean, mamma, not Wilfred. But tell me what has happened. What have the Clintons to say to it? I don’t understand you, mamma. Will you try and tell me clearly?”

“Yes, my dear, I will; but it’s not Frederick. Why do you think it’s Frederick? Dear Fred has too much sense to do such a thing—even Harry, poor child, would know better. Really, when I think of it, it seems the greatest piece of presumption I ever knew. How Wilfred could have brought himself to do such a thing, I can’t imagine. Here, my dear, you may read your aunt’s letter.”

Barbara took the important paper, and read it with some eagerness. She then untied her bonnet with a jerk, threw it off, flung her gloves into it, and ejaculated:

“Lilian ought to be ashamed of herself!”

“Ashamed, my dear!” gasped Mrs. Lynne,

equally surprised at her daughter's unusual energy of manner, and at the purport of the words. "Ashamed! Poor dear Lilian! I really think, Barbara, if any one ought to be ashamed, Wilfred ought!"

"Wilfred ought to be thankful," was Barbara's reply, "for he has had an escape. Do you think, mamma, that Lilian would ever be a good wife for a clergyman? But I am sure Wilfred is out of spirits and disappointed."

"Of course," said Mrs. Lynne; "but it's all his fault. And poor Lilian is out of spirits too—quite grieved about it."

"Not in reality," answered Barbara. "She is only vexed because her amusement is over, and she has lost the pleasure of dragging Wilfred after her from morning till night. He is the sufferer, and no one else."

"Dragging Wilfred! My dear Barbara, I can't think what you mean. Lilian never dreamt of his being in love with her. Didn't you see in the letter that—"

"Never mind the letter, mamma. You

know Aunt Florence would never blame Lilian. But the case is quite plain—Lilian is a flirt, and Wilfred her first victim. She will make many more if she can. She has behaved very badly, and just as I should have expected from her education and present mode of life.”

“Well, Barbara,” said her mother, with a sigh, “I suppose Lilian did not act quite kindly and sensibly. As you say, she could not be expected to be as good and steady as we could wish; but don’t you think Wilfred has been very foolish? I am sure your father would say so.”

“I don’t think my father would think it a very serious matter,” said Barbara; “he would only be glad Wilfred was not accepted. Certainly, he *was* foolish, mamma, but nothing worse than that. It was the height of folly in him to think that Lilian was in the slightest degree worthy of his regard, or that of any sensible and serious man.”

Mrs. Lynne gave a prolonged sigh. Barbara knew that it was a signal that her first view of

the case was altered. She always sighed over the opinion she had cast away before she fully adopted a new one.

“Lilian has been very thoughtless,” she said. “I wonder I did not think so at first. Really, my dear, when I come to think it all over, I must say it was too bad of Lilian; and she’s been going to balls and parties ever since, just as if nothing had happened. And my poor, dear boy must be so much hurt! Poor Wilfred! I wonder what he is doing.”

“His duty, I hope,” said Barbara; “and he will do it all the better now that he cannot spend hours at Belgrave Square, as he used to do. He will get over it, mamma; don’t be unhappy about him. He has been badly treated, but it’s all for the best. A great temptation is taken out of his way, and he is separated now from very dangerous companions. There is nothing to fret about, really, mamma.”

Mrs. Lynne immediately put away the pocket-handkerchief she was just preparing for active

service, and substituted a smile, though scarcely a lively one, for the tears that were about to flow in sympathy for Wilfred's sorrow.

"You are right, of course, my dear," said she, "and I won't fret. I needn't have thought so much about it after all. It may be better for Wilfred in the end."

"It *must* be better for him," said the daughter.

"Then, my dear, I'll think no more about it. There is no occasion for me to write to him now?"

This was said in a tone of inquiry.

"None whatever," was the reply. "We want him to forget what has passed, if he can; therefore, we must say nothing about it to him."

"I feel quite relieved," said Mrs. Lynne; "it's dreadful to get letters that make one anxious when there is no one to speak to about them."

"I shall burn this one," said Barbara, lighting a lucifer as she spoke.

“Oh no, my dear!” exclaimed her mother. “I must read it again. I have not done with it.”

Barbara held up the blazing paper for a moment, then rose, and dropped it into the grate. The black film disappeared up the chimney.

“Well, it does not signify,” said Mrs. Lynne. “I did not want to keep it. There’s a knock at the hall-door. It’s not your father. Who can it possibly be?”

“A visitor, mamma,” said Barbara. “Miss Solomons, perhaps, come to speak about the bazaar for the conversion of the Jews.”

A clerical-looking butler entered, and announced “The Miss Desmonds and Mrs. Herbert.” Perhaps the reader thinks the order of these names should have been reversed. By no means—that would have been a fatal mistake; the footman might make it, perhaps, but not that butler. He knew what he was about.

A lady, followed by two little girls, entered the room.

Mrs. Lynne and Barbara received them, the one with good-natured courtesy, the other with grave politeness. They shook hands with Mrs. Herbert, and kissed the children.

"Little Kate looks better to-day," said Mrs. Lynne, after the usual greetings and remarks on the weather were over. "Her cheeks are nearly as bright as her sister's," she continued, taking one of the children on her lap, and looking kindly in its face.

"Kate is really better, I am happy to say," said Mrs. Herbert; "but I must apologise for our intrusion, and tell you its cause."

"Oh, don't apologise," said Mrs. Lynne; "we are always glad to see you and the dear little girls, and you must feel lonely sometimes—every one does. I do always when Mr. Lynne and Barbara are out. We should like you to come here whenever you please, Mrs. Herbert. But what were you going to say?"

“Only to ask if you would kindly let me have the key of the square. There is a slight breeze from the east to-day, and I cannot let Kate be exposed to it. The square is sheltered, and if you will lend us the key, I could take the children to play on the shady side of it.”

“Certainly, Mrs. Herbert,” was the reply; and Barbara immediately produced the key.

“Do you like playing in the square, Kate?” said Mrs. Lynne to the child on her knee.

“I don’t know quite,” was the answer: “but Lina knows, and she likes the beach best.”

“The wind does not make *me* ill,” said Lina, who was standing beside Mrs. Herbert, and had been till now contemplating Barbara’s countenance with a look of awe.

“Oh! you are a strong little thing,” said Mrs. Lynne, “quite able to take care of Kate. Would you like to run about all by yourselves in the square, and leave Mrs. Herbert with us

for a little while? That would be good fun, wouldn't it, little ones? May they, Mrs. Herbert? Do send them by themselves for once, and stay with us to luncheon. I'll send the footman to the gate with them."

"You are too kind, Mrs. Lynne—only too good-natured to wish me to stay longer with you; but I cannot let the children play alone. I must not lose sight of them. I am most grateful to you for your kindness, but I could not enjoy being here, if the children were running about beyond my sight. Kate would overheat herself, and bring back her cough."

Little Kate had slipped from Mrs. Lynne's knee the instant that good lady had uttered the proposal just declined. The two children were now close to Mrs. Herbert's side, Kate holding her fast by the wrist, and Lina clinging to her chair.

"You are very particular about the children," said Barbara. "They don't seem at all independent: children always go by themselves to walk in the square—that is the advantage of it.

You can turn them loose, and yet know that they are safe."

"Oh, Barbara," interrupted Mrs. Lynne, "don't you see the dear children do not wish to go alone! Mrs. Herbert will come another day—perhaps some evening, when they are gone to bed."

"I can hardly thank you enough for your kindness to me," replied Mrs. Herbert, "but at no time could I leave the children, with any satisfaction to myself, unless Mr. Desmond was with them. In his absence, I must decline your very kind invitations, much as I should enjoy accepting them."

"Well, Mrs. Herbert, I suppose you know best, and I won't say any more about it. You will often come with the children, I hope."

Mrs. Herbert expressed her readiness to do so whenever Mrs. Lynne wished; and then took leave, and departed with the little girls, after a great deal of opposition from both the mother and daughter, who had urged her to remain a little longer. She had resisted firmly,

but courteously, saying that she did not like to shorten the children's walk.

"Well," said Barbara, when the door was shut, "those children will never be independent, or have any strength of mind, if they are to be so continually watched and followed."

"Mrs. Herbert is certainly over anxious," observed Mrs. Lynne, "but no wonder, poor thing! Two motherless infants are a serious responsibility. I can't find the yellow ball, Barbara."

Barbara's long arm was plunged behind the sofa, and immediately the yellow ball rolled to the feet of its owner, accompanied by its black and scarlet companions. The stair carpet was resumed, and this time there were no mistakes.

CHAPTER VIII.

My body is all wintry, and I wish
The flowers upon my path were frost and snow.

SHELLEY.

“BARBARA, my dear,” said Mrs. Lynne to her daughter one morning, as that exemplary young lady was setting forth on a very early walk, “if you should meet the little Desmonds on the beach, I should like you to ask them to spend the afternoon with me. I do so enjoy having children playing round me.”

“Very well, mamma,” said Barbara, “I am almost sure to meet them. I must invite Mrs. Herbert too ; you know she would never leave them, even with you.”

“Certainly, Barbara, Mrs. Herbert must be asked. I shall be very glad of her society, though I do think she might trust the children with me; and, Barbara, mind you remember on your way home to buy a cake and some biscuits—sweet ones, you know, but plain, because little Kate is so delicate. I wish I had the receipt of those cakes you used to have, my dear, when you were a baby; but I don’t think there would be time to have them made before this afternoon, so I won’t look for the receipt. I hope, Barbara, it is not lost.”

“I will tell Benson to get the cakes,” said Barbara, “she will understand about them; but I dare say Mrs. Herbert will refuse to come.”

“I think not, my dear; she knows that we are old acquaintances of Mr. Desmond’s, and that he would like his children to be with us sometimes; and besides, for her own sake, poor thing, she must wish occasionally for a little change, for somebody to speak to.”

“I had forgotten Mr. Desmond, mamma,”

said Barbara. "I was out, you remember, when he called on us in London. Did he ask you to take notice of his children?"

"He said they were to be near neighbours of ours, and that Mrs. Herbert was a delightful person."

"Then, in all probability, she is quite prepared for your invitations, mamma, and will be only too glad to accept them. Do you intend them to be frequent?"

"Why not, my dear? It is pleasant for all parties that I should ask them occasionally. I hope you don't dislike poor Mrs. Herbert, Barbara?"

"Dislike her, mamma," said Barbara, "of course not: she seems a very good sort of woman. She certainly spoils those little girls, but that does not concern me: I rather like her; but I don't know, mamma, why you always call her poor thing, and pity her so much."

"It's not exactly pity," explained Mrs. Lynne; "but I can't help feeling for her, alone in this

great town, at the top of that tall house, without a creature to speak to, and having the entire charge of those little twins. I can't think what she does after they are in bed; only fancy, Barbara, a stormy night, and the wind howling, and poor Mrs. Herbert sitting there, expecting those high chimney-pots to come down through the roof right upon the children's heads; and no one to speak to!"

"Speaking would scarcely avert that catastrophe, mamma," said Barbara, with a cold smile; "but I don't suppose she expects any such accident. I never heard of a governess so happily circumstanced as she is; she has her own way entirely. Most comfortable apartments to herself, a very high salary, and almost nothing to do—for those children are much too young to be taught longer than an hour a day. I should be perfectly happy in her place."

"But you can't expect every one to be as sensible as you are, Barbara," said her mother, with an admiring glance at the sensible, or rather *insensible*, countenance before her.

“I expect people to regulate their minds,” said Barbara, walking stiffly towards the door, with upraised chin.

“Don’t forget to tell Benson about the cakes,” cried Mrs. Lynne, just as the door closed behind her daughter.

Barbara “expected people to regulate their minds.” She was not at all aware of her own meaning when she said so. A well-regulated mind, according to her idea, was a mind exactly like her own—a mind stored with plain hard facts, like well-arranged heaps of stones—cold, heavy, and useful; a mind formed of only half the number of elements which enter into the composition of minds in general; all the more subtle, fiery, untameable principles having been omitted, while the solid and firm mental substance, which they should have warmed into life and beauty, alone remained. It was easy to “regulate” such a mind as this, easy to keep all calm and undisturbed within. If Barbara was satisfied with her own mental condition (and she was so to the highest

degree), she should be thankful that the trials of other natures were unknown to hers ; but she should feel tenderly for those among her fellow-creatures who had more to contend with from within. This she could not do ; indeed, it never occurred to her that such cases required sympathy. But we must forgive her, for she did her best ; she performed every duty which appeared to her as such, was kind in her own way (for her the only way) to all people ; and never witnessed pain or sorrow, which to her seem real and justifiable, without an effort to relieve it.

There are very few who can sympathise with what they do not understand ; who can cordially pity those who suffer from a cause which to themselves would produce no pain. It is a difficult lesson, but it is one that should be learnt, if indeed we wish to “bear each other’s burdens.” Even if it be too difficult for some natures, they may at least learn to abstain from condemning those who suffer ; from turning away harshly and carelessly from their wounded

fellow, though his wound be self-inflicted. He suffers; it is enough, he has a claim upon our tenderness; if we cannot draw forth the arrow, if we have no balm for the wound, let us at least handle the sufferer gently.

Mrs. Lynne would do this; for, as she herself expressed it, she never could be hard on any one. On all occasions where she thought herself called upon to blame another, she gave more pity than censure to the offender. Her compassion was roused at the slightest appearance of suffering, she endeavoured to bind up every wound; and though she often performed the kind office awkwardly and inefficiently, and poured in milk and water instead of oil and wine, still the spirit of the good Samaritan animated her gentle hand and loving heart, and her actions were blest, though undirected by a clear intellect or accurate judgment.

On many a stormy evening, when the sea roared its worst, and the wind howled among the trembling houses, Mrs. Lynne lay awake,

anxiously thinking of the sailors who were then battling with the elements, and still more compassionately of their mothers and wives on shore. There had recently been a violent thunder-storm during the night, on which occasion Mrs. Lynne almost forgo her own fears in her intense sympathy with those she imagined Mrs. Herbert was enduring.

“Only think, James,” she said to her husband, when the storm was over, “only think of that poor lonely creature, terrified as she must be, at the top of that house, and just under the roof—exactly where the lightning would fall; think of her, up there, with no one to speak to, and those poor little girls crying and screaming round her! I wish they were all in this house!”

Her sympathy in this instance was needless; for at the time it was so strongly excited, Kate and Lina were asleep, and Mrs. Herbert was sitting by the bed of the former, disturbed by no fears except such as arose from solicitude for her little charges, who would certainly have

been very much alarmed, had they awoke and found themselves alone among those fearful sounds.

Mrs. Lynne was much interested in those two children. She had known their father at the time of his marriage, having made his acquaintance at her sister's house; and she felt the strongest compassion when, in the course of the following year, she was told of his young wife's death, and of the two helpless infants so fatally introduced into the world. The event had made an impression on Mrs. Lynne's feelings. She remembered Maurice Desmond's warm friendship for Colonel Clinton, his tender, watchful affection for his beautiful and child-like bride, his evident and heartfelt happiness at the thought of commencing a domestic life in the home of his ancestors, and she now recalled her impressions of all this till her former interest was re-awakened.

Maurice Desmond's home was, as we have already heard, in Ireland. He had not been of age a year when his father died, leaving him

the sole proprietor of Slievemore, a large, rambling house, situated about a mile from the sea, and backed by a range of hills, scantily wooded at their base. The Slievemore estate extended over many broad and barren acres—barren from man's neglect. It was populous, however, for the beach was ever swarming with half-naked children, the inhabitants of those miserable huts whose brown roofs could only be distinguished from the bog on which they stood by the blue wreath of smoke which surrounded each. The sudden death of old Ulick Desmond occurred in the absence of his only son Maurice, who returned from England in time to follow his parent's remains to their grave.

Thus did Maurice Desmond, before he had completed his twenty-second year, find himself in a position of much responsibility and no small difficulty; he was the master of an idle, totally unregulated household, the possessor of an estate ill-managed for the last century, and a house so long exposed to the totally undisturbed influences of time and weather, that

there was a bat's nest in nearly every one of its upper rooms, while in the passages leading to the dens where the servants slept, frogs might often be met with, enjoying all the comforts valued by their species—namely, damp, cold, and shelter.

At this juncture it happened that Hyacinth Blake, the sporting gentleman who had hitherto condescended to discharge some of the duties of his situation as agent to the Slievemore estate, was suddenly and mysteriously obliged to leave his country and relinquish his office, delivering to Maurice a mass of confused accounts, which would have bewildered the clearest head.

But Maurice was energetic, determined, and resolved to do right and vanquish difficulties. I need not describe his endeavours, but merely state that they were earnest, and therefore in time successful; and at the end of a year from the commencement of his exertions, he found himself living happily, though economically, in one of the wings of his great house; his pretty cousin, Kate Desmond, now

his wife, ruling his small but efficient household, his estate gradually coming into cultivation, and his tenantry as nearly contented as could be expected from Irish natures, under the care of an excellent agent, who could ride no living quadruped except Snowball, the round white pony that carried him on his daily expeditions.

This happy state of things was even more short-lived than is usual with earthly prosperity. The tenantry were much disappointed when, in less than a year from her marriage, Kate Desmond gave birth to twin daughters, instead of the expected heir; but their grief was bitter and loud when on the next day they heard that the young mother was no more. The blow was sudden and terrible. Maurice sunk under it for a time, but his native energy could not long remain prostrated. He felt that it was his duty to recover his former healthy tone of mind, and in obedience to the advice of his friends, and principally of Colonel Clinton, he went abroad, leaving the infants

with his aunt, poor Kate's mother, and committing the estate to Mr. Tierney, the agent mentioned above.

In a few months he returned, with renovated health and spirits, to Slievemore and its cares, where he remained, seldom leaving home for some years, until anxiety for the health of one of his daughters, and for the education of both, induced him to seek for them a temporary home elsewhere, and a more judicious and better qualified instructress than their grandmother was likely to be.

We have already seen the result of his search, and we know that the little Kate and Lina were happily established in apartments on the third floor of a house not far from that of our friend Mrs. Lynne, at Brighton, under the charge of their governess, Mrs. Herbert, of whom we will at present say no more.

While we have been thus digressing, Mrs. Lynne's stair carpet has made steady and satisfactory progress. It was taken up as soon as Barbara had set forth on her walk, and it pros-

pered as it always did when the worker had nothing on her mind, or rather, when her mind was in its natural and normal state, filled with innumerable nothings, and free from all oppressive subjects of thought. It must not be supposed that Mrs. Lynne was not thinking ; ideas, in rapid succession, were passing across her brain, in the busy idleness of that organ.

When Barbara shut the door, that of "cakes" was prominent ; then by a natural transition the little Desmonds rose before her mind's eye ; their father came next in the long, entangled chain of thought ; then a sigh was given to the memory of his friend and adviser, Henry Clinton ; and round the fancied images of his widow and children flitted many lighter thoughts, dwelling with satisfaction on the remembrance of Lilian's wreath of water-lilies, and Alice's last new bonnet, in which she looked really pretty. Then came a vision of Wilfred grieving over his disappointment, followed by one of Frederick, the admired of all admirers,

and of Harry, poring, with pale and studious looks, over a volume of divinity.

Poor Mrs. Lynne was no clairvoyant ; if so, there would have been no such accessories to the mental image of her youngest son. She was no clairvoyant ; she would not have been one for worlds. She was no poet either. She lacked the “vision and the faculty divine.” Some men in their pride of intellect would have called her mind a blank ; though fancy, at the bidding of affection, could turn it into a chamber of imagery, containing, it is true, nothing but family portraits, many of them drawn in flattering colours. Better, a thousand times, is a mind thus filled, than one stored with bales of knowledge all branded alike with the owner’s name—stamped with the black autograph of self.

That summer’s day passed happily with Mrs. Lynne. She was not disturbed by longing thoughts of the fresh and breezy country—of cool woodland depths, with their green shade and quivering lights. She did not pine, as we might do, because her midsummer was spent

in a glaring, shadeless town, and because the dusty level of the Square was the greenest thing her eyes could rest on. She was in her home, and she did not look beyond it. No unsatisfied wishes were fermenting in her quiet bosom. Contentment was the natural attitude of her mind.

But let us not envy her. Rather let the restless, storm-tossed spirit rejoice that for him the homes of earth are full of unrest, the joys of earth fraught with disappointment—let him rejoice that he is an exile where others are busy citizens—let him be thankful for the burning thirst that all earth's fountains cannot quench, for the blind and earnest longings that tend half-unconsciously to his true and living home—let him rejoice and be thankful, though his fellow-mortals upbraid him for discontent.

But to return to our placid friend. This day was unusually pleasant to her—all her little plans were fulfilled. The invitation to the little Desmonds was given and accepted; the cakes were bought and thoroughly enjoyed by those

for whom they were destined. Mrs. Herbert's conversation charmed Mrs. Lynne, arrested for a moment her husband's attention, and interested Barbara. The little girls were happy and fascinating, as happy children almost always are. The high-spirited Lina was under perfect control, and even Barbara allowed that she was not a troublesome child; and little Kate was almost as merry as her healthier sister.

Mrs. Lynne's felicity was complete, when her son Frederick suddenly and unexpectedly arrived from London, and entered the drawing-room just as the candles were lighted, and the stair-carpet taken in hand for the evening. Nothing could give her greater pleasure than the company of her eldest son. He often paid his parents these unexpected visits, on which occasions his mother invariably concluded her extatic greetings, thus: "My darling Fred! why did you not let me know you were coming, that I might have looked forward to it?"

On this occasion Frederick came alone, having torn himself from Captain Travers for

a time, so that his mother's joy was doubled at the thought of "having him all to herself." The evening passed quickly, a "family talk" being substituted for the usual political, historical, or theological work which it was Mr. Lynne's wont to read to his family after dinner. Frederick was full of London news, some of which, as it concerns our friends in Belgrave Square, shall be presented to the reader in the next chapter.

CHAPTER IX.

A crowd of hopes
That sought to sow themselves, like winged seeds,
Fluttered about my senses and my soul.

TENNYSON.

THE presence of Mr. Lynne was no small restraint to his son. He made it a point to discourage what he termed "frivolous and unprofitable conversation ;" and though on this occasion he slightly relaxed this rule, feeling that its enforcement would condemn Frederick to total silence, still there was something in his aspect that checked anything like volubility on the part of either mother or son. The former firmly believed that the presence of her husband

only increased her felicity, and that of every member of the family ; and she did not know that she felt relieved when he set forth the next morning to keep an appointment likely to engage him for the greater part of the day.

Breakfast being over, and Mr. Lynne fairly departed, the conversation began in earnest. Mrs. Lynne took up a piece of straight-forward knitting, to which she need give no attention whatever, but keep all for Frederick and his news ; while Barbara employed herself at a piece of plain work (so called, as human faces are, not from simplicity, but ugliness), the principal materials of which were flannel and coarse whity-brown calico.

“What on earth are you making, Barbara ?” said Frederick. “Nothing that any one is to wear, I hope !”

“Clothes for a poor woman,” answered Barbara. “We are making flannel petticoats, and knitting two sets of children’s stockings for Wilfred,” exclaimed Mrs. Lynne.

Frederick laughed immoderately. “Flannel

petticoats for Wilfred ! Well ! it would not be a very unsuitable dress for him, mother, after all. Harry says he will soon be completely an old woman."

"Poor dear Wilfred," said Mrs. Lynne, with a sigh. "You should not let Harry laugh at him : he has suffered a great deal lately. Indeed, I think Lilian's conduct to him has been perfectly inexcusable. I hope he looks well, and is recovering his spirits?"

"You don't mean, mother, that he has proposed to Lilian?"

"Did you not know that?" cried Mrs. Lynne in equal surprise.

"Never heard a word of it, mother. How stupid of me not to find it out ! Why, that accounts for all. So Lilian refused him ! What a shame !"

"I am glad you think so," said Barbara. "It was indeed a shame. She encouraged him to the very last, and then pretended to be surprised."

"Well," said the good-natured Frederick,

“it was too bad of her. But perhaps, after all, she did not know he was so much in earnest; and Wilfred was foolish not to have seen that she did not care about him. I fancied she did, but Wilfred ought to have seen the real state of the case. I’m very sorry for him, though. I wish she had accepted him; what a lucky fellow he would have been!”

“How can you say such things, Frederick!” said Barbara, with a look of horror. “Lilian is unfit, by nature and education, to be a clergyman’s wife.”

“She is fit for something better, certainly,” said Frederick. “She is one of the nicest girls in London—*the* nicest, perhaps, except the Marafords. Lady Florella Maraford and Lilian Clinton are both perfect in their different ways.”

“I never saw Lady Florella,” said Mrs. Lynne. “If she is like Lilian, she must be lovely.”

“I saw her once in church,” said Barbara, “when we were in London. She is not at all

like Lilian. She is like a wax doll. You don't admire her—do you, Frederick?"

"I do, indeed, admire her very much; and I like her all the better for not being quite as clever as Lilian."

"There is no advantage in *not* being clever," objected Barbara. "But sense is better than cleverness. Lady Florella, I should think, was devoid of both. I hope Lilian is not. She has shown a want of good feeling, but I dare say she is not without sense."

"Oh, Barbara!" cried Mrs. Lynne, "I don't know why you should say that Lady Florella has no sense."

"I don't like that sort of thing, Barbara," grumbled Fred. "You should not censure every one in that way. Never mind Lady Florella—you don't know anything about her. Lilian has plenty of sense—twice as much as Alice."

Barbara, totally unmoved by her brother's rebuke, inquired his opinion as to Alice's character and disposition?

"I can't make her out," was the reply. "She is not a bit like other people. I cannot get on with her, and I've heard many people say the same; but there are a few who like her very much, and even admire her. Sir Aubrey Howard would go through fire and water to be with her for five minutes."

"Is it possible?" cried Mrs. Lynne. "Sir Aubrey Howard?—that will be delightful!"

"I never heard any good of him," muttered Barbara.

"But is there anything in it? My dear Fred, do tell me—is he in earnest? Does she like him?"

"He is evidently quite in earnest, but she does not seem to like him. I cannot conceive a woman refusing Sir Aubrey. He is a kind of Admirable Crichton—a sort of woman's ideal—perfect in all that they appreciate; and there is not in the world a more warm-hearted, excellent fellow. If Alice continues as untouched as she now appears to be, I shall be convinced that her nature is thoroughly cold and im-

practicable. I thought so ever since I knew her."

"Now," said Barbara, "I understand my cousin Alice's character perfectly. I see exactly what she is. I know her thoroughly. She is a sensible, sterling character, without any folly or genius about her, and much too rational to be fascinated by any of your Admirable Crichtons or superficial men of the world. I am sure Alice and I shall be great friends when we meet."

"Perhaps so," said Fred. "But Alice is not like you, Barbara. I should like to see you look as she did on her first night at the Opera. She is enthusiastic about genius in others if she has none of her own."

"You know very well, Frederick," said Barbara, in her hardest voice, "that I disapprove of the Opera; and so will Alice when I have spoken to her about it."

"Yes," said Mrs. Lynne, "she will indeed."

"As for enthusiasm," continued Barbara, "and admiration of genius, and everything of

that sort, she will lose it as she grows older and wiser. Those are youthful feelings which are given to some of us as trials. They are dangerous and useless gifts, if gifts at all."

"Dangerous and useless!" echoed Mrs. Lynne. "And I am sure our dear Alice will get over all that in time, and become just like you, my dear; though, at the same time, she takes after the Clintons in looks, and you are the image of my poor father, so is Harry; and Wilfred has my hair before it grew grey; but you, Fred, have the Lynne nose and mouth and your Aunt Florence's eyes. So has Lilian, I think—the eyes I mean—for of course she could not have the nose and mouth."

Mrs. Lynne paused, breathless, and was going to begin again, when Frederick interposed:

"Lilian's nose, mouth, and eyes are extremely pretty. I dare say they will be the features of Lady Rossendale before long."

Mrs. Lynne became perfectly bewildered, partly by the broken thread of her own dis-

course, and partly by the inscrutable enigma Frederick had just propounded. Barbara's clear head instantly solved the riddle.

"Lord Rossendale! Will he marry Lilian?"

"It is very likely," said Fred, oracularly.

Their mother understood it now.

"Is it true?—do you mean it, Fred? I am so delighted—so very sorry for poor Wilfred, I mean. Are they engaged? When is it to be? Is Barbara to be bridesmaid?"

Barbara shook her head, and raised her chin, while Frederick answered:

"Oh, Ma'am, you are in too great a hurry. It's only conjecture—the result of my own observation, and other people's too. Nothing is fixed yet; but you'll see she will marry him, particularly as it's all over with Wilfred."

Mrs. Lynne gave a sigh to the termination of this speech, and then a smile to the rest of it, saying:

"To be sure, it can only be your conjecture, Fred. Florence would have written to me the first thing if anything had happened."

The conversation that followed need not be recorded. The mother and son kept up a long desultory dialogue, varied by occasional remarks from Barbara, and touching upon innumerable subjects—"trifles light as air"—though, at the same time, more dust-like than aërial in their nature. Frederick talked over nearly all his friends and acquaintances, and told of marriages past and future—good and bad, certain and uncertain—all apparently possessing an equal interest to his listener. But I hope my reader feels some anxiety to know how far Frederick was right in his intelligence concerning his aunt and cousins. Presuming that some such feeling exists, I shall shortly satisfy it.

Mrs. Clinton's mind was in a whirl of delightful excitement. Lilian had entirely recovered her brilliant looks, and Lord Rosendale's attentions had become more decided than ever. It was also quite impossible to doubt that Sir Aubrey Howard was serious in his admiration of Alice. All his friends remarked that he was now "in earnest about

something ;” and no one who saw him in Alice’s presence could doubt what that something was.

The world—the female world, at least—talked enviously of Lilian and Alice, and some tried vainly to persuade themselves and others that the sisters were not all but engaged to their respective admirers. Major Burton, an old acquaintance of Mrs. Clinton’s, went so far as to congratulate her on the approaching marriage of both her daughters, and received a contradiction of the report, which only served to confirm his belief that it was true. And like most reports of the kind, it was not entirely false.

“Mary,” said Lord Rossendale one day to his elder sister, Mrs. Lester, “Mary, I mean to marry Lilian Clinton.”

“By all means, Henry,” replied his confidant—his only one, by the way,—“marry her directly, and I’ll give her those diamonds which ought to have been left to you.”

There was not much imagination in the composition of Henry St. Quintin, Viscount Rossendale, but he had a fair share of fancy, and by the help of this faculty he was immediately gratified by a vision of Lilian in black velvet, with diamonds sparkling on the gold of her fair head.

“Thank you, Mary,” he said; “that’s very good of you—but only fair, after all. My wife ought to have them.”

“I always considered them as yours, you know,” said Mrs. Lester, “though our father gave them to me.”

“I’m glad you have had the use of them, Mary,” he replied, with a look of self-complacency. He fancied he was making a generous speech, and graciously accepting the payment of a debt. Thus it was arranged that Lilian should have the diamonds, and that Lord Rossendale should have Lilian. “She is the best, the loveliest, the cleverest creature in existence,” thought he, “and I know her heart

is mine. We were made for each other ; and now that I have seen her, I can't exist without her. I'll wait no longer."

In truth, Lord Rossendale, hitherto so impenetrable, was over head and ears in love. He was himself surprised at the strength of the feeling that had grown up within him. He had never been what is generally called a susceptible youth. Ten years ago he had fancied himself attached to one of the seven daughters of a clergyman at Oxford, but he forgot his boyish fancy on leaving college ; and two years after, he did not even sigh when he saw the announcement of Lucy Danby's marriage to the Reverend John Brown.

From that time his heart remained untouched till Lilian Clinton took possession of it, and then came a change over his whole existence. He thought and dreamed of nothing but Lilian ; where she was not, he sat silently, with gloomy countenance and frowning brow, watching for her arrival, and scarcely noticing those among

his friends whom his dark looks did not deter from attempting to converse with him.

Every one remarked his satisfied appearance when the Clintons were present, and contrasted it with his morose bearing when he found himself in scenes ungraced by them ; and all his friends agreed that Rossendale's temper was quite unbearable, now that he had fallen in love. He was snappish even to Mrs Lester, his only sister and best friend, until she extorted his secret from him ; and thenceforth there was scarcely a day that he did not visit her, and talk about Lilian as long as that kindest of sisters would listen.

Mrs. Lester liked both Lilian and Alice, and admired the former with all her heart. She was very anxious that her brother should marry and acquire an interest in his own home, for she hoped this would prove a remedy for the frequent fits of *ennui* and restlessness to which Lord Rossendale was subject ; and she therefore listened kindly and affectionately to all her brother's outpourings, and encouraged him

to ascertain his fate at once, and hope the best.

It was the 10th of June, and the time was what we call the afternoon, though in fashionable parlance it would be designated as the early morning, when Lord Rossendale entered his sister's room, his countenance radiant with happiness. Mrs. Lester looked up from her work, and seeing the unwonted sunshine lighting up his usually clouded brow, she took his hand, and drawing him beside her on the sofa, said :

“ Now, Henry, tell me all !”

And he told her all. But let us leave the brother and sister side by side in their happiness, he telling with agitated joy of the hopes which since the morning had burst forth into blossom and filled his heart with fragrance—she listening eagerly, with a sister's entire sympathy, and gazing upon his gladdened countenance with eyes as sparkling as his own. We will see how it fared with the inmates of the house he had just quitted.

Lilian sat beside her mother, and Alice at the feet of both. Mrs. Clinton was laughing gaily, and had just recovered from a flood of tears. Lilian's countenance was calm, though there was a heightened colour in her cheek, while Alice's was very pale.

"God bless you, my dear child," said Mrs. Clinton, "God bless you, Lilian!"

Carelessly, without a thought of Him whose blessing was sought, were these words uttered — words the most sacred that can fall from a parent's lips. Yet they were spoken in an impulse of affection — mother's affection, the purest of all earthly love; and perhaps by Him whose name is Love the sin was pardoned. But Alice looked upon the laughing countenance of her mother, and read of worldly joy upon the lips that had just parted for a prayer; and instantly before her spirit's sight arose the pale glory of her father's dying face, and she seemed again to hear *his* last "God bless you, Alice!" Her unseen tears fell silently, and she could not command a word to wish her sister joy.

“My darling Lilian! I am so very happy! Everything we could have wished—he is so charming in every way, so handsome, so clever, and so good and steady—really, he is perfection in every point of view—is he not?”

Lilian only smiled and coloured. Alice looked up and saw the smile, which changed the subject of her own sad thoughts.

“I hope you will always be happy, dear Lilian,” she said, with a faltering voice.

“Don’t you think I shall?” asked Lilian; “don’t you like Lord Rossendale very much?”

“I like him very much indeed,” said Alice, “and I trust—I think you will be happy. But are you sure—quite certain of your own feelings?”

“Quite,” said Lilian, steadily—too steadily, Alice thought.

“I can’t stay here any longer,” said their mother, hastily rising. “I must write to Jane at once. How delighted she will be!”

When the sisters were left alone, Alice

took her mother's place beside Lilian, and said :

“ Is it *quite* settled, Lilian ? have you really accepted him ? ”

“ Oh, Alice ! did you think I would refuse him ? ”

“ No,” replied Alice, “ I knew how it would be ; and yet I can hardly realise it, now that it has come. You will be happy, dear Lilian ? you *are* happy ? say you are happy ! ”

“ I am,” she answered—and there was nothing in her looks that belied her words—“ I am indeed quite happy, dear Alice ; how could I be otherwise ? Is he not, as mamma says, all that could be wished ? and do not my friends and all his friends approve of our marriage ? and have we not been attached to each other ever since—almost ever since we met ? Oh, Alice ! he is so good, and clever, and distinguished ; and he loves me with all his heart.”

“ Indeed, I think he does,” said Alice ; “ I am sure he does. I should be miserable if

I thought otherwise ; but we have not known him long. And you, Lilian, are you sure of your own feelings ?”

“ How could I mistake them ?” answered Lilian.

And Alice was silent. She indeed felt that love once admitted into the heart, could not long remain there without assuming an acknowledged sway, a power that could not be mistaken ; and as she looked at Lilian’s glowing cheeks and downcast eyes, her doubts were all dispelled, and she rejoiced in her sister’s happiness. Long did they sit together, talking over the future—Lilian’s future ; painting it in the brightest colours, such as youth and hope are wont to use. How beautiful was the picture ! True and steadfast love, which was to last for ever : a home where nature wore her fairest aspect, where art had brought her embodied dreams of beauty, and where wealth ministered to every taste. These were the outlines ; and the picture grew into fair detail beneath the pencils of Lilian’s bright fancy,

and Alice's pure imagination, till they both gazed in rapture on the painting, and thought it truth.

It was indeed a brilliant prospect. Lord Rossendale was, as Mrs. Clinton said, "charming in every way—handsome, clever, good and steady;" but I must slightly qualify all these adjectives. He was charming to those he liked; but cold and distantly courteous to all others. He was handsome; but his eyes were of too light a blue, and there was at times a contraction about his lips suggestive of a passing cloud of temper. He was clever—that is to say, he had read much, and had written political pamphlets sharply to the point; but he was too unimaginative to be highly intellectual. He was good and steady; his moral character was unimpeachable, he had never been dissipated or extravagant, he was an affectionate brother, a liberal landlord, and punctual when at home in the discharge of his many home duties; but self-denial was to him even more painful than to most men,

and a wish unsatisfied could deprive him of peace for months, and involve all around him in the same loss. Five-and-twenty years ago, his nurse had said of him, that she never met with such a queer, contrary temper in the whole of her nursery experience; and the cross child developed, first into the sulky schoolboy, and then into the irascible youth, till the ill-tempered man stood revealed to the world.

But we must not descant on his bad qualities, particularly now that only his good ones are apparent; for he is at the summit of happiness, a cloudless sky above him, and before him a wide scene of beauty and of joy.

CHAPTER X.

I will pluck it from my bosom, though my heart be at
the root !

TENNYSON.

“Now, Mary,” said Lord Rossendale, as he sat one day beside his sister in her pretty, but small boudoir, “now, Mary, I’ll tell you all our plans : we have arranged everything in the most delightful way ; there is no occasion for the smallest delay, and Mrs. Clinton agrees that we are to be married in three weeks. Then we shall spend a few days in her little paradise at Richmond, and after that we go abroad—down the Danube ; and we shall take

up our abode at Norneley Manor in February next."

"Delightfully arranged, indeed, dear Henry. I hope you will both enjoy your tour, and that nothing will happen to interfere with your plans. How well you look, and how happy! Oh, Henry! how thankful you must feel!"

"Thankful! oh yes, of course I'm very thankful; but if there were any obstacles, if I were not quite sure that all was going on smoothly, I should be wretched. No one feels things as I do. I ought to be happy and prosperous, for I really can't bear the reverse."

"I trust," replied Mrs. Lester, "that you never may have to bear it, dear Henry. You seem very confident in the future."

And she looked in her brother's face, while an expression of fear and doubt passed over her features — features, in form so like his own, in expression so strangely different.

It would have been a study for a physiognomist, to observe the countenances of that brother and sister at that moment; to trace

the same lineaments in both, the same outline, almost the same colouring—and yet to read a contrasted meaning on pages so similar. The one spoke of nothing but hope, the other of many mixed feelings, of which fear was, perhaps, the strongest—fear for another's happiness. Yet Lord Rossendale's was not a joyous disposition, nor was his sister of a gloomy nature; but *she* had suffered real sorrow, and knew well how surely it lurked beneath the fairest plant of earthly happiness; while *his* past life had been one of almost unbroken prosperity, though not contentment; and he now stood beneath a fresh burst of sunshine, and could not, or would not, brook the mere idea of a cloud. He had never learned *to bear*. The greatest pleasure was a pain to him, if accompanied by any disappointment or inconvenience. He would cast from him the sweetest roses of life, if touched by one of their thorns. But there were none, he thought, in the rose he had now plucked. This joy, at least, would be perfect and enduring.

“Mary,” he said, “you don’t look encouraging. What are you afraid of for me?”

“Only that all your hopes will not be fulfilled—at least, not entirely. You expect too much; and, dear Henry, you don’t seem to think of the many new duties you are about to undertake—you don’t seem to have any fears as to your own fitness for domestic life. You think only of its pleasures, not of its trials.”

“Trials! what trials could I have with Lilian? Duties! will it not be my inclination, my delight, to do everything that can make her happy—everything, in fact, that I ought to do? What should I have fears about? Oh, Mary! I wonder how you can talk of fears to me just now! I had only a moment’s time to stay with you, and now it is over—good-bye.”

And he hurried away, and was in ten minutes more by Lilian’s side, forgetting his sister’s anticipations, and all things, but Lilian and himself.

Mrs. Lester was accustomed to witness her

brother's sudden movements, and therefore did not reproach herself as the cause of his hasty exit; she wished, on the contrary, that she could have said more to him on the subject of his future prospects, and could have awakened him a little to a sense of his own responsibilities and the necessity for a little more self-control and self-denial, than he had hitherto been in the habit of practising.

“But,” thought she, “he is beginning life anew, and their mutual attachment is so strong, that they cannot but be happy. Henry will not be a selfish husband—at least, I hope he will not. After all, his selfishness is the result of his isolated life; he has never had another’s happiness in his power. Lilian will bring all his good qualities into action, and for her sake he will conquer his faults. They will be happy, I am sure.”

But the thought was accompanied by a sigh—the only outlet to a dim fear, not even mentally expressed. It was no wonder that Mrs. Lester looked anxiously on those who were about

to venture upon marriage; for her own past experience of married life had been most gloomy. When very young, she had allowed herself to be united to one for whom she felt nothing but indifference; and for five years of her life she was engaged in a ceaseless struggle to prevent indifference from growing into contempt. Mr. Lester was her father's choice, not hers. There were many reasons which rendered this marriage most desirable in the eyes of the late Lord Rossendale, and poor Mary had never even dreamed of resisting her father's wishes. She calmly submitted to her fate, scarcely knowing how bitter it would prove. Lord Rossendale was spared the sight of his daughter's unhappiness; for, in six months after her marriage, he died of apoplexy produced by a fit of anger with one of his servants.

It is needless to relate how Mrs. Lester endured for five years the companionship of one whose mind was as vulgar as his manners were refined—one who possessed not a single sentiment worthy of an immortal being—one whose

actions had never met the world's censure, solely because he lacked the energy to be wicked, and the courage to fling away the good reputation he so ill deserved. She bore it, as many women bear a similar fate, patiently and calmly. The world had no idea of her sorrows—in fact, the world never thought about her, though she occasionally mingled with its votaries. She was merely a pale, inanimate person who had very little to say, but who, nevertheless was rather to be liked than otherwise. No one missed her during the long season which she spent beside the sick-bed of her husband, ministering to his fretful wants, and bearing with the thankless impatience which never gave place to a moment's gratitude, till death silenced the murmuring tongue, and closed for ever the lips through which a noble aspiration had never passed, nor a word of praise to God or love to man.

Though Mary Lester wept above the corpse of him she had tended so long and patiently, yet that corpse had not been long in the grave

before the widow's heart acknowledged a peace which the wife had never felt; and she soon became perfectly happy; passing much of her time in visiting the poor, and relieving their wants—an arduous and most engrossing task, particularly in London, where a woman has so many difficulties, even dangers, to encounter, in the revolting localities inhabited by the objects of her benevolence.

Mrs. Lester proved, however, that it is not, as some say, impossible for a lady to visit the poor in London. She contrived to do so, without drawing upon herself the observation of the world, and without even being spoken of as a “charitable lady;” for her name scarcely ever graced a subscription list, nor was it once suspended over a stall at a bazaar. She did not get up charitable fancy balls, nor did she make flannel petticoats for the poor. The pure stream of her charity flowed in a still, dark current straight from the well of Christian love in her heart, to the arid and thirsty spots where it was needed. It did not trickle through

circuitous channels under the glare of the world's sun, gathering defilement as it proceeded, till its shallow waters were thanklessly absorbed.

Hers was real charity ; for it strove to minister to *all* the wants of its objects. She did not visit the haunts of the poor with money-bags, but with words of sympathy and kindness—with courteous and gentle advice, with occupation for the unemployed, hope for the despairing, food for the hungry, medicine and delicacies for the sick, and instruction for the ignorant ; though in this matter she confined herself to imparting useful household lore. She left all direct spiritual teaching to her venerable friend, the clergyman of the parish, and his excellent curates, one of whom was Wilfred Lynne. But though she did not distribute tracts, or teach religion to the poor, yet she might often be seen beside the squalid tenant of a couch of sickness, reading the Word of God, or telling of His deeds of love and power in the days when He trod our earth, and

“ the common people heard Him gladly.” But why should we publish her good deeds ? They are known to Him who prompted them, and to those who received their benefit ; we need not drag them into the world’s glare.

Benevolence was the strongest of Mrs. Lester’s good qualities—not only benevolence to the poor, but good-will towards all men. She was not intellectually highly gifted ; but one precious talent was hers—a talent, indeed, though it belongs more to the heart than to the head. This gift was a delicacy of perception—an unerring tact, that enabled her at all times to do good without giving pain—to handle the sorest mental wounds, and even probe their depths, almost without causing the sufferer to wince. This, indeed, is a most rare and valuable gift—rare in woman, and ten times more rare in man. Our friend and hero, Wilfred Lynne, indeed possessed it to no ordinary degree ; it belonged, perhaps, to what some people called the feminine part of his character, and it certainly is a

quality that cannot exist without the acute sensibility and quick perception which, when combined, form what we call sympathy. It is well, perhaps, that woman should possess this power more than man; for she is more frequently called upon to exercise it; very often for the benefit of those who have none to give in return.

At the time of which I am speaking, Mrs. Lester's thoughts were generally occupied with her brother's prospects, and her observations of Lilian's character and disposition. She often visited the Clintons, and received them at her own house, and was rapidly becoming intimate with her future sister-in-law, and acquainted with the friends and relatives of the family. She soon became much interested in Alice's character, which was, however, an enigma to her—pleasing, though incomprehensible.

At this time, Mrs. Clinton was in a whirl of delightful preparation; Lilian in a kind of joyous dream; and Alice—poor Alice!—in a state of mind which neither she herself, nor

those about her, could understand. She was more solitary than ever. Her sister, the companion of her life, was about to form other ties, and had already begun to break those that bound her to Alice, who reproached herself for the sorrow which she could not but feel at the change which had already commenced. She looked pale and dispirited; and though she took a part in the many preparations then going on, she did so without energy, and with little interest. Mrs. Lester felt deeply for her distress at the approaching loss of her sister, but she scarcely understood the nature of this distress, nor did she know that it was not the only disturbance in Alice's heart. There was a more deep-seated trouble there—a worm in the bud—a blighting influence, perhaps more strongly felt because it was strenuously resisted.

It will be remembered that, at the time when Mrs. Clinton first discovered Lord Rossendale's incipient regard for Lilian, Sir Aubrey Howard's unmistakable admiration of Alice did not

escape her notice. It became every day more apparent, until Mrs. Clinton was fully persuaded that her second daughter's marriage would follow close upon that of Lilian, though she was cautious enough always to deny to all inquirers that "anything serious" was in progress.

But Sir Aubrey Howard was perfectly serious, if such a term can be applied to the wild, passionate devotion with which Alice had inspired him, and the eager hopes and tumultuous fears, which now kept him in ceaseless torture. He was an ardent, unsubdued, reckless being; full of generous impulses, warm-hearted, capable of noble ideas, which only passed through his mind, and never rested there; strong in his affections, violent, though short-lived, in his hatred. He was one who could commit a rash or sinful action, but not a mean one. He was true and upright, and endeavoured to keep all his promises, save his baptismal vows. Of these he never thought; and if he did, how could *he* renounce the world? He was one of its idols

—one of the chief favourites of what in London is called society; and no wonder, for there was a charm in his manner, a fascination in his voice, his look, his step, which no one, at least, no woman—could fail of noticing.

There were a few men, certainly—mostly officers, but not in his regiment—who could not think why he was made so much of. He was not tall enough for their taste; he spoke low, which they called affectation; he generally moved slowly, which excited their impatience; he was slightly near-sighted, which caused them continual offence. Major Burton could not endure him, while Captain Travers made him a model for imitation. Frederick Lynne cordially admired him, while by Harry he was as cordially despised. But we do not care what impression Sir Aubrey made upon the world in general, or these four worthies in particular; let us see what Alice thought of him. She was “the ocean to the river of his thoughts;” and to all appearance, she remained as cold and as unmoved while receiving his ardent homage, as

does the ocean when a rushing stream falls into its depths. But Alice loved all that was beautiful, all that was gentle and attractive—

“She loved too little else, nor this aright,”

and she was won by his dark and speaking eyes, and the music of his low, sweet voice; and not by these alone: she was more surely won by his graceful thoughts, his rich poetic fancy, his tender, sincere, and unconventional homage, and his sympathy in many of her hitherto most lonely feelings.

“The heart leaps kindly back to kindness,” and it was in the form of kindness that Sir Aubrey’s love at first displayed itself. But Alice no sooner became conscious of the enthralling influence he began to possess over her imagination, than she determined to resist it with all her strength. Young and inexperienced as she was, she saw her danger. She knew that her heart was rapidly becoming engrossed with one idea. She felt that if

society had tenfold charms for her now, it was because *he* was to be found there.

Alice had always been accustomed to examine and analyse her own feelings—sometimes a beneficial, often a fruitless and unprofitable practice; but in this case it saved her from unconsciously allowing this new and tyrant feeling to assume unquestioned sway within her breast, as most persons of her age and sex would have done. She knew that she was loved; she knew too well that she loved in return, and that with no tranquil affection. But she resolved to uproot the growing passion, though her heart should break with the effort; for her love, overwhelming as it was, could not blind her moral sight, or lull her sleepless fears of doing wrong. Yes—wrong; for Alice deemed it a sin to unite herself to one who could not lead her onward towards truth and goodness, help her to discern the highest truth and to seek the purest good. Though her own mind was a chaos of dim doubts and haunting fears, and religion was to her a lovely

mystery, and the Bible a glorious arcanum, yet she revered both with an intensity known to few of those who walk in clearer light. She discovered with a pang, that though Sir Aubrey shared many of her sentiments, to this one he could not respond ; he seemed to admire what he called her “sense of religion,” and to love her all the better for it, but he admired her for a feeling he could neither understand nor partake.

And Alice knew too well that Sir Aubrey not only ignored God in his thoughts, but disobeyed Him in his acts. She knew that while man’s code of honour was never once forgotten by him, God’s moral law had been fearlessly transgressed ; and what availed it to her that she found him true and loving, if he was false to his Maker, and unloving of purity and virtue ? What availed it that his voice was like low music, and his eyes soft as distant stars, if that voice never answered to God’s praise, and through those eyes the soul never looked to Heaven ? What availed it to

Alice, who, in her lonely weakness, needed one who could tread firmly beside her in the true path of life? What availed it if Sir Aubrey loved her with the whole devotion of a heart that knew no higher feeling?

And therefore Alice resolved, by unvarying coldness of manner when they met, and by avoiding to meet him when it was possible, to check the affection which she could not avoid returning, and to freeze *his* love while she concealed her own. But he would not be repulsed; and it must be confessed that at times a look or tone would break through her cold exterior, and speak from her heart to his, teaching him to hope.

It is hard for youth to keep up a constant feigning, and Alice's powers were sorely tried, for Sir Aubrey's attentions were unremitting, despite all the appearances which might have led him to believe them unwelcome.

No one was in possession of her secret. Mrs. Clinton scarcely thought of anything but Lilian's *trousseau*; and Lilian's mind was en-

tirely occupied with her own happiness. She occasionally made a careless allusion to "Alice's conquest," but felt no anxiety about her sister, knowing that there could be no obstacle in the way of her marriage with Sir Aubrey, should any serious feeling exist between them. Alice bore her burden alone, and fought unassisted in the hardest conflict she had ever experienced.

It was within a fortnight of the day fixed for Lilian's wedding, that a small party assembled at Mrs. Clinton's dinner-table, consisting of Lord Rossendale and his sister, Frederick and Harry Lynne, Sir Aubrey Howard, and Major Burton. Alice did not expect to meet her admirer, who had called that morning when she was out of the room, and had then been invited by Mrs. Clinton to join their family party at dinner; and Mrs. Lester observed that Alice grew pale as death when he entered the room. She did not start, for so far she could control herself. Her place at dinner was between Sir Aubrey and Major

Burton, and she endeavoured to listen to the tedious stories and imperceptible witticisms of the latter, while Sir Aubrey's words were all that she really heard.

The evening passed quickly and pleasantly to most of the party. The gentlemen had no sooner emerged from the dining-room (which they did in less than ten minutes after the ladies had left it), than Lord Rossendale found his way to Lilian's side, and was soon seated by her on the sofa in the back drawing-room, looking over a large portfolio of her sketches, and describing in glowing terms, the natural beauties of Norneley Manor.

Mrs. Clinton, Major Burton, and Frederick Lynne were seated together in another part of the room, engaged in lively talk, which can scarcely be dignified by the name of conversation; the remaining four sat near the round table, Mrs. Lester and Harry apparently playing at chess, or trying to get through the game with the least possible attention to the moves. Alice was watching them, and Sir Aubrey

watching *her*, while he played carelessly with an ivory cup and ball which he had taken from the table.

“I like my game better than theirs,” said he to Alice, glancing at the chess-board.

“Theirs is more than a game,” she replied, “and yours is less, I think.”

“It is too much for me, at all events,” he said. “I cannot catch the ball on the point, which I am bent upon doing.”

As he said this, he gave the ball an impatient jerk, which sent it high in the air, breaking the string ; the ball fell back on the ends of his fingers, which tingled with momentary pain. He put aside the dismembered bauble, and said gravely :

“Are you superstitious, Miss Clinton?”

“I am not sure,” she replied with a smile. “I think I am ; but why do you ask ? what has superstition to do with this broken string ?”

He scarcely seemed to hear her question, but went on in a low voice ;

“When the turn of fate is at hand—when we approach a moment on the event of which hangs the happiness of a life, does not the mind, intolerant of suspense, become credulous for the time, and seek an oracle in the most trivial thing, flying for certainty to the petals of a daisy, the fall of a rain-drop,—or even such a toy as this?” he added, taking up the cup and ball.

“Yes,” said Alice, “I know the feeling well—at least, I used, in my childhood, very often to persuade myself that my future depended on the swiftness of a drop of rain trickling down the window ; but your oracle is not a fair one, your success did not depend on chance, but on your own skill and perseverance.”

The words were no sooner uttered than she longed to recal them, as the knowledge flashed across her mind, of what would be his interpretation of them. She turned away her face, but he saw its heightened colour, and thought he understood her.

It did not discourage him to observe Alice's constrained manner, which continued during the rest of the evening. He had no difficulty in accounting for it; he thought that Alice's intense delicacy of feeling had taken alarm at the few unguarded words of indirect encouragement which had just escaped her, and which she perhaps fancied were more than should have been addressed to one who was not yet her declared lover. Sir Aubrey at that moment felt a stronger hope than he had yet experienced; and, prompted by his natural kindness, which suggested that his conversation might at that moment increase Alice's painful confusion, he turned from her to join in a gay discussion then going on between Mrs. Clinton and her nephew Frederick, as to the comparative merits of two novels, which, we greatly fear, had no merits whatever.

By this time the game of chess was over, Harry Lynne being the victor; and a desultory conversation followed between the ex-combatants

in which Alice occasionally joined. Still she could not help hearing almost every word spoken by Sir Aubrey's voice, low as it was, and rendered almost inaudible by distance. She heard him say to her mother, that he hoped to meet most of the present party in Kensington Gardens the next afternoon, to which Mrs. Clinton replied, that it was very likely, as she generally walked there after church with her daughters.

Alice trembled as she heard these words, for something told her that the worst struggle was at hand. She did not that evening exchange another word with Sir Aubrey, until, at its close, he came forward, with extended hand, to bid her good night. Quietly, and with averted, not downcast eyes, she took leave of him, and for a moment her hand lay coldly within his own, neither resisting nor returning the fond pressure it received. That cold touch came like frost upon his budding hope; he went home sad-

dened and perplexed ; and that night, in the long intervals of his troubled sleep, he resolved that the next day should end his suspense.

CHAPTER XI.

Thou art, methinks, some star,
And I, its lowliest, humblest worshipper,
Worship the more, because thou art so far,
The light and glory of another sphere,
As cold and bright.

G. S. SMYTHE.

The guests departed, and the mother and daughters immediately went to bed, or rather, to their rooms. It was long before Alice lay down upon her restless couch. Memory, thought, imagination were all active within her, and the fear of the morrow lay coldly upon her heart.

She sat down, resolved to *think it out* ; but

it would not do, and she rose and walked rapidly and noiselessly to and fro, not attempting to check the stream of recollections then overflowing her heart and brain. Her ear was haunted by the music of one of Strauss's waltzes, in which she discerned a certain wailing pathos struggling through the gay rhythm of the dance-music. It was a favourite air with Sir Aubrey, and she had often waltzed with him to it. What would she now give to forget that haunting melody! and with it came upon her excited memory the music of his voice—the meaning and power of his whispered words. Then she recalled his earnest looks, his slow but graceful movements, and all the thousand fascinations which for her at least he possessed. Her mind was in a whirl, and for the time, hope and fear were alike forgotten.

But she was not one to indulge these feelings long. She ceased her troubled walk, opened her shutters to admit the morning twilight, and went to bed, not without a prayer, short indeed, but earnest to intensity, for rest

and calmness—calmness, both for herself and him — happiness, entire happiness, for him alone—her own, she thought, was dead.

She fell asleep, despite of the conflict within, and rose the next morning from her troubled dreams, strengthened for the coming woe. The joyful Sabbath bells were ringing in all directions ; many various tones were heard, symbolic, alas ! of doctrines equally various taught within those Temples of one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism. But this thought occurred to none of the three who sat round Mrs. Clinton's breakfast-table that Sunday morning. *She* cared nothing for divisions in the Church ; she took care to go to the right place of worship, meaning the fashionable one ; and every Sunday her carriage might be seen driving past the open doors of her parish church, on its way to the aristocratic chapel where the Honourable and Reverend Aurelius St. George lisped forth his somniferous, but short discourses. But for this Sunday there were other arrangements.

“By the bye,” said Mrs. Clinton, at the con-

clusion of the morning meal, "we are not going to Mr. St. George's chapel to-day—some wonderful man is going to preach a charity sermon there, which I am sure will be endless. What shall we do this morning?"

"Rest ourselves and the horses," said Lilian. "What do you say, Alice?"

"Rest the horses," she replied, "and let us walk to that large church—it is not far."

In Alice's perturbed and suffering state, she dreaded the long morning at home, and longed for the soothing stillness of the church, and the calming voice of prayer; though she felt that she could scarcely collect her thoughts to a personal act of devotion.

"It is quite near," she said. "Mamma, do let us go there for once."

"I believe there is very good music there," said Lilian, "and a fine old window. We may as well go there, perhaps. Will you come, mamma?"

"Well, my dear, I think I will, as both you

and Alice seem to wish it. We can just go this once, and see what it is like."

And so it was arranged. They went "for once" to their appointed place of worship; and "for once," they arrived some minutes before the service commenced. During these minutes, Alice strove hard to compose her mind, and she was assisted by the influences of surrounding things. The solemn, yet brightly-tinted light from the stained windows, was so different from the glare of the street without; the cool, motionless air felt so calm and pure after the hot dusty breezes she had left; and as her eye wandered round the holy edifice, or lost itself in the recesses of its high and sculptured roof, nothing met her glance that did not speak peace and comfort to her soul.

In the house of prayer, the spirit of prayer could not be sought in vain; and over the stormy waters of Alice's heart, did that spirit brood, till the tempest was stilled, and her soul absorbed in worship.

Thus was the weak-hearted comforted and

helped. From that day, Alice loved our Church and her faultless liturgy with a deep, reverent, and grateful love, which never in after years declined.

The service over, they walked home.

“That was a very cool and comfortable church,” said Mrs. Clinton, as they proceeded ; “the music was good, too.”

“We had a very stupid sermon, though,” said Lilian.

“Yes,” replied her mother, “all about obedience, and resignation, and patience—things we knew before.”

“Perhaps, mamma,” continued Lilian, more thoughtfully, “those sorts of sermons are what the poor can best understand ; and many poor people go to that church. But I don’t like that style of preaching ; do you, Alice?”

“I don’t know,” she replied confusedly, as if awaking from a dream. “I have not thought whether I liked it. I did not attend to the style—was it not well expressed?”

Lilian laughed.

“ Oh ! Alice, for shame ! ” she said. “ You, who made us all come to church, and are so particular about joining in the service—you paid no attention to the sermon ! What were you thinking about all the time ? ”

“ You are rather hard upon me, Lilian. I cannot criticise the sermon, but I tried to listen to it. ”

“ Tried to listen ! ” said her mother. “ Then you confess it was an effort ? ”

“ It is always rather difficult, I think, ” she answered, “ to keep one’s attention to a sermon, unless the preacher is very eloquent ; and then one is apt to think too much of him, and too little of his words. ”

“ There is no fear, ” said Lilian, “ that we should think too much of that prosy old clergyman ; so it is to be hoped we shall profit by his discourse. We shall be very obedient, resigned and patient. ”

“ *I* must, ” thought Alice ; but she said nothing. “ I must be obedient to-day, resigned and patient to-morrow, and for ever. ”

The hours passed by, and in the afternoon

they went to church again—"to the chapel of St. Aurelius," as Fred Lynne scoffingly termed their accustomed place of worship.

It was another interval of peace for Alice ; but all peace was banished from her spirit, when she found herself driving to Kensington Gardens with her mother and sister. The drive never seemed so short ; she had scarcely begun to awake her dormant energies when the carriage stopped. It had hardly done so, when Lord Rossendale was seen advancing, and in a moment he had placed one hand on the door, and extended the other with cordial eagerness towards Mrs. Clinton, with whom he shook hands almost affectionately — tenderly with Lilian, and courteously with Alice, whose eyes had now begun to wander restlessly over the crowd that thronged the Gardens. They left the carriage, and walked to the river-side, Lilian on Lord Rossendale's arm, and Mrs. Clinton leaning on that of the eternal Major Burton. Alice walked by her mother, trying hard to collect her thoughts, and summon her

resolution for the inevitable struggle that was at hand.

She knew he would be there, and she felt that the trial was come—that within that very hour the words must be spoken that would separate her for ever from one who, in spite of all her efforts, had twined himself about her heart. But though that heart might break, she would not shrink from the conflict, or swerve from her resolution. She would not unite herself with one whose love for her was the most elevated feeling he possessed—the only feeling not entirely earth-born — the only principle, the sole guardian of his moral being, the solitary restraint that kept him from evil; such evil as to his impetuous nature, seemed not only harmless, but defensible—evils which the law of man forbids not—and to him the law of God spoke in vain. Alice knew all this: Sir Aubrey was no hypocrite, and never disguised his personal carelessness to religion, though he could talk of admiring “religious feeling” in others. In the world, though no man was

more popular, his character was well known. Alice never allowed herself to entertain the vain hope of raising and reforming him by her influence ; she knew her own weakness too well to think of trusting her future to one who could not from the first support and guide her on her upward path. But she felt, as I have already said, the dangerous fascination of his manner, and the irresistible charm of his poetical mind, and enthusiastic, yet gentle disposition. Besides, his love for her was sincere idolatry—a passion intense and elevating, such as was hitherto unknown to him, who now for the first time combined reverence with love.

Alice's forced, and almost unvarying coldness could not destroy all hope in his unsubdued nature ; and she could plainly see that he must hear his fate from her own lips, before he would abandon all anticipations of success. It was a bitter thought to Alice, that he must never know, never form an idea that she had undergone a moment's suffering for his sake—that it had cost her a single pang to reject his affection.

He must think her cold, unmoved ; he must believe that she can crush *his* hopes, and feel no despair—that she can wring *his* heart, while her own knows no agony. It was well that she had early learned self-command, for it would now be needed.

All this passed through her mind with the rapid and confused rush of thought, peculiar to such moments, when suddenly all mental action ceased, giving way for an instant to unmixed despair, as Sir Aubrey's voice struck upon her ear, and her arm was drawn through his. She suffered him passively to lead her a few steps away from her mother and sister, who passed on, in conversation with their respective companions, Mrs. Clinton giving Alice a gratified look as she went by.

Alice and her lover slowly followed the rest of the party. Both were silent, for both were under the influence of feelings and thoughts that could not readily find expression. Alice was endeavouring to confirm herself in her resolution, and Sir Aubrey was struggling with

the fears, which, sanguine as he was by nature, could not but oppress him, when so much happiness and hope was at stake. At last, the wild throng of long repressed feelings struggled forth into words.

“Will you listen to me now?” he said, “will you let me speak—let me ask you my fate? You will not avoid me now? For once you will not repulse me; not coldly check the expression of feelings which can exist in silence no longer. Miss Clinton, you will hear me at last!”

She could not trust herself with a word, or a sign in reply.

“Miss Clinton,” he continued, “my life is in your hands: if you reject me, existence will be scarcely life. I have but one hope, one feeling now: one absorbing thought. It will be so for ever; it is the spring, the principle of my being; you can make it the poisoned source of endless suffering; you can sentence me to despair! Oh, Alice! I have feared it—I fear it now, and it is more than I can bear;

suspense must cease. Can it be possible that such love as mine has no power save to wither and consume my heart; has not its very force and warmth extended it to yours? You are to me an object of passionate and pure idolatry—am I nothing more to you than a stranger, a chance acquaintance, met to-day, forgotten to-morrow? Speak, Alice—I must know my destiny at once—speak!”

He had exchanged the touching accent of supplication for an almost imperious tone, as he uttered his concluding words. The melody of his voice was as a spell to Alice, and though she had not a word at her command the previous moment, she could not now help obeying him. She spoke, but her voice shook, and her words would have been inaudible to one whose whole future did not hang upon their import.

“Say no more, I intreat you—no more such words; I cannot bear to hear you. Oh! Sir Aubrey,” she continued in a firmer tone, “do not think me ungrateful—do not suppose that

I am indifferent—I mean insensible enough not to be pained by what you say of your own sufferings. Let me hear you say that you will some day—and very soon—be happy—and then leave me, for it can never be.”

Alice scarcely knew what she was saying, and these incoherent sentences were all she could find to utter what she would express, and conceal so much at the same time. She felt bewildered, after all her attempts at preparation. It was as much as she could do to struggle for calmness; command of language was more than she could obtain.

Her last words had struck upon Sir Aubrey’s heart, and were now reverberating there with intolerable distinctness. “It can never be,” she had said. He did not look upon her countenance for a gleam of hope; he would have found none in her still features and tearless eyes: he felt that hope was ended.

“I might have known it,” he said, in a tone so changed, so mournful, that Alice trembled at its altered sound; “I should have felt that

it could never be, that you despised me always. I had dreamed in my mad presumption, that you, pure and elevated as you are, might stoop in pity to the world's unhappy votary, and raise him nearer to your own bright sphere. How could I have hoped it for a moment, when every word of yours, every look, since I first met you, spoke with such cold distinctness, telling me that all my love was vain? and yet I dreamed at times—Forgive me, if I have pained you now; forgive me if I refused to read my sentence in your icy manner. Oh! Alice, I do not upbraid, I thank you for it, for it was kindly meant. I am unworthy of your regard. How could I hope for your affection! Alice, give me one kind word, one look of pity—the first and last, before I go forth to bear my sorrow through the life you have darkened!”

In the midst of her suffering, Alice felt relieved at finding that her rejection was at once understood as such. She had dreaded his eloquent entreaties and persuasive voice,

feeling almost sure that her resolution would fail before them. Now it was all over: the blow had been struck: and it was now no longer an impossibility to express herself, when she was to console, not grieve him.

“You must believe that I feel for you,” she said, “that I am touched, more than I can say, by your affection. I would have given the world to have been spared the pain of requiting it as I have done. I shall always be grateful for your regard; do not talk of suffering, for I cannot bear to hear you, and I know all will be well with you in time. I hope, I trust it may be so—believe me, if it is otherwise, I cannot be happy. At least, it will always be painful to me to think I have caused another’s sufferings. Now leave me, Sir Aubrey; but first,” she said, trying to smile, and extending her hand towards him, “tell me you will be happy.”

He took her hand, and looked in her face at last. She could not meet his eyes, till the necessity for one strong, final effort forced

itself upon her mind. She drove back her rising tears, and turned upon him her calm large eyes. He read of pity, kindness, perhaps, in that look, but it seemed to him as unimpassioned, as an angel's glance of compassion on a child of earth. And his heart confessed that such indeed was the distance between her nature and his.

"Happiness is not for me," he said, "but never let a thought of my despair shade your bright future. My presumption has brought its own punishment. I leave you, Alice, for I would not grieve your gentle spirit with my sorrow; and I thank you, I bless you, Alice; for you have made it less bitter with your last kind words." He turned away, but her hand was still in his. "Alice," he said, slowly and falteringly, "is it then all over? will you *never* bid me hope?"

"*Never*," was her firm and distinct reply; and before she could add one softening word, he was gone.

She mechanically returned to her mother's

side: walked half unconsciously with the gay and loquacious group to the gate of the park; answered her mother's questions, and spoke casually to her sister during the drive home. It was scarcely an effort to do so; she felt stunned, and not fully awake to a sense of what had occurred; and she acted and spoke in her usual manner from habit, the mere mechanical force of custom. This could not go on, however; each hour roused her more and more to consciousness of pain; for time never brings relief till it has first brought torment; and it was now doing its cruel work for Alice.

At last the day was over, and she was alone in her room, as on the preceding evening. How long ago it would have seemed, had she been able to look back to it! She was in the same spot where twenty-four hours ago she had experienced, and then tamed down so many contending emotions; where she had resolved to strike the blow which had recoiled with such stunning force upon herself; where

she had prayed for the strength and courage which bore her up through the deed, but failed her now—there was no difference in the time and place ; but that which she had looked on firmly last evening, as a woe to come, was now past, and she could not bear to turn and look at it again. It was over. Her mind was no longer in a whirl, but stagnantly calm. She did not think, or even remember—a dull cold pain was at her heart ; and she had no other consciousness.

She had mechanically extinguished her candles, and opened the window-shutters, admitting the faint light, which even in London, lives through a moonless summer night. She sat upon her bed side, her white dressing-gown thrown round her, her bare feet resting on the carpet, her hands crossed idly on her lap. Her eyes rested vacantly on the streak of light that lay across the floor, and her parted lips were white as the cheeks, over which her dark hair fell in heavy masses of unbroken

shadow. It was a gloomy picture—colourless and sad. Suddenly the door opened, admitting a bright gleam of light, a soft rustling sound, and the beautiful face and form of Lilian. She entered, with quick, noiseless steps, and sat down beside her sister on the bed.

“What has happened, Alice?” she said, her clear voice softening as she spoke.

There was no answer; but Alice slowly raised her eyes towards her sister’s face.

“Alice! dear Alice!” said Lilian, “speak to me—tell me all—has Sir Aubrey—”

“Oh, Lilian!” cried Alice, stung into feeling by the mention of his name, “don’t speak to me of him. It is all over—all over now.” And her head fell upon her clasped hands, struck down by the awaking memory of what had past.

Lilian, greatly perplexed, drew closer to Alice’s side, tried to raise the drooping head, put aside its tangled tresses, saying, as she raised them from the now burning cheeks:

“ Oh ! Alice, you cannot have refused him ! ”

Alice did not reply.

“ My dear Alice ! I thought—we all thought—that you liked him. You must have liked him—and you walked with him to-day ; did he say anything—did you—could you refuse him ? ”

“ I did,” said Alice, rousing herself ; “ I told him it could never be. Oh ! Lilian, don’t ask me about it now. I ought to have told mamma—but I could not.”

“ Oh ! Alice,” said Lilian, “ she will be so disappointed—but what have you done ? you are quite miserable, poor dear Alice. I know you liked him ; why have you done this, and made yourself, and all of us so unhappy ? what were you thinking of ? ”

“ We will talk to-morrow, dear Lilian,” replied Alice in a calm, though faltering voice. “ You must not be unhappy about me ; I will tell mamma all to-morrow morning. Go to bed, dear, and never mind me. All is over, all is right now—good-night.”

She kissed her wondering sister, and led her from the room.

“Good-night,” said Lilian, from the door, “good-night, Alice, I won’t disturb you any more. I am so very sorry, Alice dear, for your grief, though I hardly know what it is.”

And thus they parted for the night.

CHAPTER XII.

Then in life's goblet freely press
The leaves that give it bitterness ;
Nor prize the coloured waters less,
For in thy darkness and distress,
New light and strength they give.

LONGFELLOW.

“ Nonsense, Lilian !” said Mrs. Clinton, as, on the afternoon of the next day, she sat alone with her eldest daughter. “ Nonsense ! don't tell me that Alice was right. I never met with such provoking folly !”

“ I don't say she was right, mamma,” said Lilian, “ but she did what was very difficult and painful, because she thought it was what she

ought to do, and we should not be hard upon her, for she is very unhappy.”

“To be sure she is,” replied Mrs. Clinton, “and so she deserves to be, for her ridiculous romantic notions. I really could not have believed it. She confessed to me this very morning that she was attached to him all the time, and yet she was selfish enough to break his heart, and disappoint me.”

“Oh, mamma! not selfish,” cried Lilian, “is it not plain that she has made herself suffer as much as any one, if not more! She did what she thought right. She fancied, I think, that Sir Aubrey was not very—not exactly—”

“Not exactly what? not exactly a modern Don Quixote, or counterpart or Alice’s favourite, ‘Red Cross Knight,’ a mixture of methodism and chivalry! My dear Lilian, surely *you* don’t agree in such absurd fancies!”

“Oh, no!” said Lilian, with a smile, “I am sure Henry is no hero of the sort; but Alice has strange ideas, and would rather die than act in contradiction to them; and after all, mamma,

we must admire her courage and high principle."

"But that is not high principle," said Mrs. Clinton, "it is fanatical folly. If Sir Aubrey was a dreadful character, I could understand it; but he is a most warm-hearted, amiable man, and Alice could have done anything with him. She could have brought him round to her own ideas, wild as they are, and made him as good as she could wish. Really, Lilian, I have no patience with her!"

"Well, mamma, it *is* provoking," said Lilian with a sigh, "but you cannot be angry with poor Alice, she looks so wretched."

"Angry, my dear! I'm not angry, you know I never am; but it is too vexatious to see such prospects thrown away, by the romantic scruples of that silly child."

"We had better forget the prospects," said Lilian, "and try to revive Alice's spirits if we can. Don't regret it any more, mamma!"

"My darling Lilian! you are all my consolation," gaily replied her mother, "*your* prospects

are bright, at all events ; and I have no follies of your's to vex myself about. I suppose I must not expect perfect satisfaction from both my children."

Lilian smiled ; " You know, mamma," she said, " there must be some trouble and disappointment where two daughters have to be brought out at once, and as you have had none from me, you must expect it from poor Alice."

" Disappointment, indeed ! and of quite a new and original description. The parties attached to one another ; the marriage all that could be wished, not an opposing relative on either side, nor the shadow of an obstacle—and that silly Alice, with her own hand, destroys all our hopes !"

" And her own," said Lilian, in a half whisper.

" What will Major Burton say ?" continued Mrs. Clinton, " what will every one say ? It was known to all London. I was congratulated about it a hundred times. Lilian, what shall I say when I am congratulated again ?"

“Oh, mamma! you always know what to say; and besides, people will soon find out that nothing is going on between Alice and Sir Aubrey, and you will hear no more about it.”

Mrs. Clinton shook her head impatiently, “I shall be tormented enough,” she said, “before the matter is forgotten. I only hope no one will imagine that Alice has any other attachment. It will be said, perhaps, that Sir Aubrey was frightened away by the Lynnes. I would not for the world have it supposed that there was anything in that quarter.”

“I don’t think any one will suppose that, mamma,” said Lilian, “we do not often meet Fred and Harry in public, and as for poor Wilfred—”

“Poor Wilfred! I fear we shall not see him again till you are married. The world will never say much about *him*, I imagine. Well Lilian, for your sake, I won’t say anything more to Alice about her unaccountable whim, but reconcile myself to the disappointment. She will be more sensible next season, and this one is

nearly over for us—quite over, I may say—for I can't stay in London after I have lost you, Lilian."

"Don't call it losing, mamma," said Lilian.

"I should not have used such a discontented word," replied her mother, "I look forward to many happy days in your house. What should I have done, Lilian, if you too had been a hero-worshipper, and had refused Rossendale, because he was merely human? I am glad I have *one* sane daughter."

While this conversation was going on, the subject of it sat alone upstairs in her little room, trying hard to occupy herself, and *not* to think. The trial was quite over now. She had done what she resolved to do. She had also informed her mother and sister of what had passed. She had borne the reproaches of the former, and the uncomprehending wonder of the latter, and now she had nothing more to do but to live on, if possible, unshaken by what she had suffered. Alice's mind, though scarcely a well-regulated one, was not morbid.

She did not enjoy misery, and revel in grief, like many of her heartless, though would-be sensitive cotemporaries. Her sorrow *was* sorrow indeed. All she felt was earnest, deep and real. Such was her grief, and such, too, was her craving for peace and rest, though as yet she did not hope for either. Light, indeed, must be the pain, and cold the heart that feels it, when it is nursed and cherished by that heart as a welcome inmate, and not a stinging evil.

Alice suffered deeply, but she struggled to subdue her anguish, and to keep her thoughts averted from the subject that filled her heart. This was the most difficult part of her task, for *one* form was ever before her eye, one voice still filled her ear, one idea pervaded her soul, and it was hard to be wilfully blind to that form, deaf to that voice; it was hard to turn from that idea—nay, it was impossible—all that Alice could do was to seek, in occupation, for the suggestion of other ideas; and this she did, though loathingly, as one in a fever strives to swallow his appointed nourishment.

She sat, reading a book — Tennyson's "Poems." It was a book Sir Aubrey did not like, and she had never opened it before. She read at random, not understanding a word, but unconsciously admitting a series of beautiful, but indistinct images into her mind. Though she read silently, the rhythm of the verse made a soothing melody within, drowning for the time that *other voice*. The poet's song lulled her sorrow to sleep; and she read on, till her liberated tears fell fast upon the pages of that beautiful, dreamy poem, "The Lotos-eaters," whose words, though she hardly knew what they meant, touched some chord within. At its conclusion, she turned the leaves hurriedly, still weeping, but trying to find something else to read which might drive back her tears. Her eye was arrested by this stanza :

"To feel, although no tongue can prove,
That every cloud that spreads above
And veileth love, itself is love."

She read no more, but closing the book, tried

to realise this feeling. But the cloud was too dense, and her faith too weak. All was cold and dark around her ; but she would not repine. No, there should be no yielding to vain regrets, —no self-indulgence ; her sorrow should not hinder the performance of a single duty, should not alter in the minutest degree the daily actions of her life. She would, to all outward seeming, be as she was before this blow ; and thus resolving, she rose, put aside her book, and went down stairs, with a step both firmer and slower than was her wont.

Her mother said nothing more to her on the subject of her “unaccountable whim,” and Lilian did all she could to raise her spirits, and divert her mind. Lilian was very kind and affectionate to her sister, and became daily more so as the time approached which was to separate them. No one dealt roughly with Alice’s wounded spirit ; but still she felt, as she had always done, quite alone with her sorrow. In the midst of kindness, she pined for sympathy, scarcely knowing that she did so. She loved Lilian

tenderly, she felt a growing friendship for Mrs. Lester, and was deeply grateful to both for their affectionate efforts to restore her spirits; ~~but~~ still there was something unsatisfied—a blind sense of want, a dim straining after something afar, a strange consciousness of exile. She felt spiritually homeless. She had never felt otherwise since she lost her father; but now, this her second trial revived the feeling to intensity; but she never expressed or yielded to it. From the moment when, laying aside her book, she went down stairs to her mother and sister, she let no sign escape her which could indicate that all was not well within.

Mrs. Clinton soon recovered her vexation, and became again absorbed in preparations for the approaching wedding, in which Alice actively assisted. For this she was warmly commended by her mother, who thus found an able assistant where she had expected quite the reverse. The day was fixed, the *trousseau* completed, the invitations sent out. There was to be a gay breakfast, after which the

happy pair were to go to The Hazels—Mrs. Clinton's villa at Richmond—for a few days previous to setting forth on their continental tour. Everything was planned, arranged, completed. Lord Rossendale's devotion seemed to increase hourly, and Lilian's happiness was entire. She thought her Henry was perfection, and rejoiced heartily at every proposal of his relative to their future plans. "All went merry as a marriage-bell" at that house in Belgrave Square.

But how fared it with the two rejected ones?—how fared it with those who had offered to these envied sisters the treasures of their love in vain? Sir Aubrey went abroad, to seek either excitement or oblivion there. We need not follow him, but turn to Wilfred Lynne, from whom we have been too long absent. Let us look at him, at he sits alone in his gloomy little room, at midnight, writing. He is changed since we saw him last. He is thin and pale, and there is an altered light in his deep-set eyes. They are as clear and truthful

as ever, but their brightness is more spiritual, and they lie in the shadow of that high, calm forehead, darkening their cloudless blue. His lips are scarcely coloured; they would seem almost statuesque in their chiselled regularity, but for their occasional movement, as he unconsciously and inaudibly gives utterance to the thoughts he is recording. The short, but luxuriant waves of his fair hair, are pushed back from the forehead, whose breadth and height is fully revealed by the scanty lamplight. He writes hurriedly and carelessly, and the page is blotted and defaced. He evidently sets no value on his task. Presently the sheet is pushed aside, and with a deep sigh, he throws himself back in his chair, and remains lost in thought. He has been writing the following stanzas :

Despair not ! though thy life lie dark before thee,

Though all its joys seem centered in the past :

Though storms may rage, and clouds may gather o'er
thee,

Fear not the darkness, fall not to the blast !

Despair not! in thine hour of calmer sorrow,
When mists hang coldly on the sunless sky,
And thy heart shrinks from many a hopeless morrow
Of wintry stillness, worse than misery!

When thy life's stream flows languidly and slow
Through the morass, across the lonely waste,
Leaving the woodlands, where bright lilies grow,
And all fair things the joyous waters graced.

When thy most cherished hopes have fallen round thee,
Thy visions faded into viewless air,
When ruined shrines, all desolate surround thee,
Regret may cloud thy spirit—not despair!

Look up in Faith! Beyond the cold grey sky
Still lives and glows the orb of heat and light:
Is not the Source of Love and Wisdom nigh,
Though earthly clouds obscure thy spirit's sight?

Look on in Hope! Around thy ruined shrine
The sheltering ivy flings her robe of green:
O'er arch and pillar wreaths the eglantine,
And life and beauty revel on the scene!

Look round in Love, on this fair earth and heaven,
With all their living denizens; survey
Creation's maze of loveliness—'twas given
To teach thee faith, and chase despair away!

Nor let thy spirit sink beneath the power
Of that life-weariness, whose thralldom steals
Over the lonely heart in the still hour,
When grief's first anguish it no longer feels.

The future lies before thee. Though a cloud
May hang above it, hope's own rainbow-light
Throws its bright hues upon the vapoury shroud,
Till purer sunshine burst upon thy sight.

Fear not! nor deem thy spirit stands alone
In the cold shadow of the haunting past:
For there be kindred hearts, though yet unknown,
Whose sympathy may gladden thine at last.

Oh! trust thou still in human love—the sign
Of that which cannot fail thee: still believe
In earthly Truth, the shadow of divine—
In nature's thousand charms, which ne'er deceive

The heart where faith and love are deeply shrined,
Where high imagination throngs the soul
With spirit-guests from heaven, and the mind
Yields all her powers to their sweet control.

Oh! then despair not: know that heaven is near thee.
Gaze on the blue protecting arch above—
A cloud may float there, but the thought will cheer thee,
That, like the sun it hides, 'tis formed by love!

Wilfred was not a poet in the usual acceptance of the term. He seldom wrote verses, and when he did, it was merely as a safety-valve for over-wrought feeling that he adopted the language of song. His verses, though thoroughly genuine and fresh from his heart, could never be called original, for he did not reject his own ideas when he found that he shared them with others, who had already expressed them more felicitously. He would not have been disturbed, if some critic had pointed out to him that the last of the above stanzas was almost identical in thought with the three lines of Tennyson's I have already quoted. But no critic ever handled Wilfred's rare effusions ; they were the expressions of his deepest, and naturally most secret thoughts and feelings, and in his life-time, they never saw the light.

" Despair not !" was the burden of his song ; but alas ! on this occasion, it was his thought and not his feeling, which had flowed forth in verse. He had described what he believed and longed to experience. The lay was an effort at

self-consolation, not a song of hope or dirge of sorrow; the former he could not, the latter he would not, utter. Still, it was not despair which Wilfred experienced—despair is only for the coward and the unbeliever; but it was something far deeper than regret.

For a time, after his last interview with Lilian, he endured the worst sufferings that disappointed affection could inflict on a singularly sensitive and earnest nature. It was not the passion of an hour, but the true, deep love of a whole life that was blighted in a moment. No presumptuous, new-born hope was then cast to the dust; but the object of the intense aspirations and prayers of years. Wilfred went from Lilian's presence a stricken man—stricken by what to him was the fiercest blow that he could receive, and for a time it felled him to the earth; and his spirit lay in dust and ashes, while he performed his daily duties with unchanged fidelity, as far as externals went; he could not do more with that poisoned arrow in his heart.

He heard of Lilian's approaching marriage—heard that she was happy, and her prospects bright; and that his blighted love must die, for its existence was a crime. Then Wilfred roused himself and looked up to Heaven with something of his childhood's trustful faith, resolved to submit and obey.

“I have lost all,” he thought, “all my earthly hopes. That which was my life was taken from me. The love which blighted as it is, was more to me than a thousand joys, is now forbidden, and I cast it out.” And then, as a condemned captive asks for life, or rather, as an orphan child might ask for love, did Wilfred, fallen in prayer before his Father in Heaven, entreat for strength and light—strength, to triumph over earthly passion and with pure hands and faithful heart to minister at God's altar, free from every lower tie: light, to see every duty that lay about his path, every means by which God's glory or man's benefit could be advanced and set forth—light, more than all to see that “All is well” through the blinding

dust that rose from the fresh ruins of his happiness ; and lastly, ere he ended his earnest beseeching, that name which through life had been a spell to him, the name of his lost Lilian was breathed in prayer, and every heavenly blessing invoked upon her head. Then he arose and turned without one reverted look from the deep, deep grave where his fair hopes slept for ever—and walked on firmly along his appointed way, bearing his heavy cross—tottering at times beneath the load, but never resting, never turning aside, and still looking upward, though bent beneath his burden.

And if the iron entered into his soul, it was not the iron which sears and hardens, but rather that which penetrates but to heal. The plough of affliction cut deep into the soil, burying every plant as it went on—and the rains descended on the bare and furrowed field, and the winter blasts howled over it for a time, but in the end it burst into tender verdure ; and the summer sun looked down on the waving meadow, where flowers of every hue hid among

the grasses ; and birds, whose song is of the sky, nestled in the lavish herbage.

But at the time we write of, this growth had scarcely begun, though the seed was sown. Wilfred's faith was unshaken and his love unchilled ; but his hope was dormant. It was not a hope that could *die*.

CHAPTER XIII.

Obey the voice of a Divine command,
“Remember mercy!” haply thou shalt save,
If only one of all that mournful band,
From gaol, from workhouse, or an early grave!
Hear, thou, and Heaven shall hear thy voice for mercy
crave!

MRS. NORTON.

I MUST now turn from the luxuries of Belgrave Square, and the civilization, if not comfort of Wilfred's lodgings, to the nameless haunts of poverty and vice.

I must ask the reader to follow me through a narrow lane, into a dark and disgusting court, which, however, is bright, clean and airy in

comparison with some of the deeper plague-spots of our metropolis. Let us enter this half-open door, and ascend the foul and ruined staircase which leads to the upper rooms of this wretched tenement. The discordant din of all vile sounds lessens as we ascend ; and now the shrill scolding of women, barking of dogs, and screams of neglected children, are all subdued into a distant murmur ; the voice of sinning and suffering humanity, rising to heaven, half blasphemy and half lament.

But in one room, if room it may be called, a small, low attic—other sounds are heard—the low wailing of a suffering babe, the groans of a man, and more distinct than either, a woman's voice in accents of consolation.

The scene within was one of touching sadness. On the uneven and rat-eaten floor knelt a ragged woman—ragged, but clean. She was very young, suffering and poverty had not yet taken the roundness from her cheek, though its sallow hue told of want, and the marks of tears were fresh upon it. She knelt leaning over

a broken cradle, where, among threadbare fragments of a blanket, lay her first-born and only son, a meagre infant of six months, on whose colourless face the sorrows of years seemed to brood. Its little hand and arm lay upon the cradle's edge, and the limb seemed frailer than a reed, and moved restlessly and weakly to and fro. Its large, sunken eyes were turned upward with the vacant look that told too plainly that they were sightless, and a few, short locks of dull, flaxen hair fringed the forehead, which disease had rendered preternaturally large and prominent.

On the other side of the cradle stood a lady—Mrs. Lester, the faithful friend of the poor and sorrowful. She was looking tenderly down upon the dying child and afflicted mother, and occasionally turning aside to speak a word of sympathy to the head of that wretched family—a young man, who sat on the floor in a corner of the room, his face buried in his hands, and groaning bitterly, with the demonstrative grief of his countrymen, for he was Irish.

The room was miserably furnished ; there was a bed, but sadly scant of covering, one broken chair, the cradle, two low wooden stools, an old chest, some shelves, on which a few articles of crockery-ware were ranged ; and these, with two or three of the rudest culinary utensils, were all. But on the wall, opposite the foot of the miserable bed, hung an object which—false or superstitious as the thought may be—seemed to hallow this abode of misery. It was a crucifix of rude materials, but well carved ; and at this moment the only gleam of sun that struggled through the rags hung before the casement, rested on the white form of the representation of the dying Saviour, which stood out in strong relief against the dark wall.

“ I must leave you now, Anty,” said Mrs. Lester. “ I am glad to leave your child so free from pain. Don’t fret so much, Tom,” she continued, turning to the man ; “ but try and comfort your wife. The poor baby will soon be at rest.”

“That will it,” said the mother, “glory be to God! An,’ Tom, dear, ye’ll not leave your work to-morrow to stay with me?”

“I can’t work,” replied the man. “Sure I’ve no heart to work, and *it* (pointing to the child) goin’ from us.”

Many ladies, in Mrs. Lester’s place, would have immediately rebuked the folly of the improvident Irishman, who shirked his work because his child was ill, and neglected to earn a day’s pay which he could by no means afford to lose. It was a good opportunity for a lecture on industry, but Mrs. Lester let it pass. She felt for the undisciplined tenderness of the poor Celt’s heart, and could not reproach him.

“I know you are a handy man,” said Mrs. Lester. “Do you think you could mend an old dressing-case of mine? The hinges are broken, and the fittings are all loosened. You can stay with your wife to-day and to-morrow, and yet earn some-

thing. I will give you two shillings, if you do it neatly."

"I'll be ever thankful to ye, Ma'am!" said Tom, with many eloquent gestures; while Anty seized the hand of her friend (yes, they were friends, though one was Lord Rossendale's sister, and the other Tom Minogue's wife), and, kissing it vehemently, exclaimed, with a certain wild solemnity of voice and manner: "the Lord bless ye, and bless the day ye came to us first, and the ground ye walk on, and the sky that's over ye, for your kindness to the poor that's banished away from their country! Oh! baby, baby," she cried, kneeling once more beside the cradle, "won't ye pray for the lady to-morrow when ye're an angel in heaven!"

Mrs. Lester could scarcely understand this violent gratitude for what seemed to her trifling benefits. She had been accustomed to the usually reserved and sometimes surly manner of the English poor—and Anty's

enthusiasm was rather painful to her than otherwise. She had not yet succeeded in releasing her hand from the woman's grasp, when the door was pushed open, and Wilfred Lynne appeared.

There was no surprise at the meeting, for it was not an unfrequent occurrence; but scarcely a word was interchanged. The small and close apartment could ill accommodate a second visitor, and Mrs. Lester withdrew, glad to see that her poor friends were not left alone in their sorrow.

"How is the child to-day?" said Wilfred, seating himself on the solitary chair.

"He won't be long with us," replied the man; "and Anty's worn out entirely with the watchin' and frettin'."

"True for ye," said Anty, "glory be to God! But the poor child's asy to-day, and has no pain seemingly."

"There is none," said Wilfred, "where your child is going."

He was interrupted by a low cry from the suffering infant. Anty sprang forward, and took it in her arms.

“He’s taking another fit!” she cried in accents of despair. “Oh! what’ll we do! Oh, Sir! won’t ye pray for us, and you a clergyman?”

“Sure ye’ll pray for us!” cried Tom; “there’s not a priest to help us, but maybe ye’ll be heard for your goodness to the poor!”

“God help you!” said Wilfred, solemnly: “there is no other help!”

The child, as he spoke, flung its wasted arms upwards with a convulsive movement towards its mother’s face, struck out its feet, and lay a corpse upon her knees.

“Your child has ceased to suffer,” said Wilfred to the man. There was no need to tell the mother this. Her wan features brightened into something like a smile of joy at her babe’s release. But the father wrung his hands, and wept bitterly over the remains of

his blind and puny offspring; while Anty quietly closed its eyes—not more sightless or less expressive now than they had been in life, and laid the forsaken tenement of the child-angel in the yet warm cradle, straightening the convulsed limbs, and smoothing the hair, still heavy with the dews of death.

“Look!” said Wilfred to the sorrowing father, “see how peacefully he sleeps! You used to say that his moaning was breaking your heart. It is hushed now, and he rests in heaven, where there is neither sorrow, nor crying, nor any more pain.”

The man was calmed, and crossing himself reverently, knelt beside his wife, and kissed the dead infant.

“God’s will be done!” said Tom. “An’ shouldn’t I be thankful that his pain’s over, and that Auty won’t be racked any more with mindin’ him?”

But the mother’s grief broke forth at the thought that she had nothing more to do for the

treasured object of so much love and sorrow, and she wailed bitterly, rocking herself to and fro.

“ Oh ! my child,” she cried, “ my poor darlint, will I never hear you cry again ? Will I never again hould ye in my arms, nor rock yer cradle ? Will ye never come to your father’s home across the water, to the land that we were banished from ? Sure it was the stranger’s air that killed ye, my child ! Ye couldn’t thrive among them—ye couldn’t live in the dark close town where no one cared for ye, darlint, but the parents that ye’ve left behind. And it’s dark ye were, my jewel, for ye wouldn’t have yer sight where there’s nothing but sin and sorrow to be seen, and not a glimpse of God’s sky, only smoke and dirt !”

“ Anty !” said Wilfred, soothingly, “ listen to me. Listen, Tom, and try, both of you, to be calm. Your once blind and suffering child is at this moment enjoying the light of heaven. You believe this, I know ; and, Tom, you said that you should be thankful that his pain is

over. Be thankful, then, though you have lost a treasure ; and be hopeful, too, and look with all the more love and faith to heaven, for a child of your own is waiting for you there ! You would not wish him back again, I am sure ; you loved him too well for that."

" Oh, Sir !" cried Anty, " them's blessed words ye say, and true ones too. God bless and comfort ye, Sir, whenever you're in need of comfort !"

" Amen !" said Tom ; " and bring ye to the true faith !"

A shade flitted across the countenance of Wilfred as they spoke.

" I thank you," he said—" I thank you both, and I pray that we may all come to the true faith—to the faith that helps us to endure all, and hope through all—to the faith which will lead us when the toil of life is over, home to our Father's house !"

" Amen !" they said again ; and for a few moments there was silence—such silence as to angel ears is musical with prayer.

“ And now I must go,” said Wilfred. “ I will send you a few little things, which may be useful just now, and I will come again soon.”

A fervent blessing was interchanged between the poor Romanists and the Anglican priest, who proceeded with quick steps to another scene of suffering.

It was up a dark lane, darker and fouler than that which led to the court he had just quitted. He entered a low damp room on the ground floor of a ruinous tenement, where light and air could scarcely penetrate. In the damp close atmosphere of this den a fire was faintly burning, and there was a kettle beside it, and a tin teapot, showing that though the first necessities of life were ill-supplied, its luxuries were not entirely wanting. The inmates of the room did not rise as Wilfred entered. They were two women : one, a young girl, was sitting on the floor perfectly unemployed ; the other, an old woman, sat on a low stool, and was engaged in tending the miserable fire, and muttering

complaints that the kettle would not boil. She turned sharply round as Wilfred entered, but uttered no word of welcome; while the girl stared vacantly upon him.

“ You are not sorry to see me again so soon, I hope ?” said Wilfred, kindly.

“ Why,” said the old woman sulkily, “ gentlefolks and parsons haven’t much business here, I suppose.”

“ We’ve nothing to say to them,” grumbled the girl ; “ and they can’t do us no good.”

“ Don’t say that, Anne,” answered Wilfred. “ I should wish very much to do you good, and I have come here in hopes of doing so.”

“ Ah ! so you said last time,” murmured the hag : “ you talked about doing us good—you’re more like to do us harm, spying after the way we gets our living ! Go and do good to the folks who want it, and leave us alone.”

The girl broke into an idiotic laugh, which contorted her ugly features into hideousness. Wilfred did not move, but said quietly :

“ I wish to do good to those who want it ; and I do not wish to spy, or to know anything about the way you get your living, my good woman. I don’t come to ask questions at all.”

“ Then you’re a queer parson,” said the old woman.

“ I hope I am a faithful parson,” answered Wilfred. “ I am sorry to find you disrespectful, but I am not annoyed at your rudeness. If you really wish me to leave you, I will do so—of course I will not remain in your room against your will.”

“ He won’t ask questions,” said the girl. “ Let him stay, mother.”

“ Well, as you’re so different from the other gentlefolks, you may stay, Sir,” said the mother ; “ and I beg pardon, if I wasn’t civil—but I’ve well-nigh forgot how to be civil.”

Wilfred’s Christian courtesy and forbearance had conquered the old woman’s stubbornness. She rose and set a chair for him.

“ I have been promised some work for you

and Anne," he said, seating himself: "a lady wants some house linen made up. The work is in small pieces, and you are to be paid for each. You can send Anne to my lodgings with the work, whenever any of it is done.

"Thank you, Sir," said Anne, her vacant countenance assuming a momentary expression of satisfaction, "I'll do my best, Sir."

"Work!" cried the old woman, "work for us! He's laying a trap for us, Anne!"

"I do not know what you mean," said Wilfred, gravely.

At this moment the door opened, admitting the old woman's second daughter—a girl scantily but gaudily clothed, evidently in the cast-off apparel of one far above her in station. She entered with a quick step, and not seeing Wilfred, threw herself down beside her mother, flinging off her small bonnet and tawdry shawl, and displaying as she did so, a form of exquisite grace, and a countenance of that pale, sad beauty which Guido loved to paint. Her long

golden hair fell about her shoulders, gleaming in the flickering fire-light, which displayed the delicate regularity of her features, marred only by the shade which surrounded her large, but sunken eyes.

Wilfred read her story at a glance, and pitied her from his heart.

“ Who is that, mother ?” she said, starting to her feet as she detected his presence.

“ A friend,” said Wilfred, before the mother could reply. “ I did not know you had two daughters,” he continued, turning to the old woman.

“ Ah ! and I didn’t mean you to know it ; but I *have* two daughters—ay, two,” she said, looking wistfully at the soft blue eyes of her younger child—“ I’m not too good to own you, Bessy.”

“ Is your name Bessy ?” said Wilfred to the girl. “ You are very young ! Why do you hide your face !”

His kind voice, his gentle manner, and more

than all, his allusion to her youth, went to the poor girl's battered and corrupted heart. She looked at him for a moment—oh, what a tale of sin and agony did he read on that fair young face!—and then she cast it on the cold earth, in a passion of tears.

“She's often so,” said her mother; “it'll pass off.”

“No!” said Wilfred, “it must not pass off yet.” And stooping over the poor child's prostrate and quivering form, he took her by the hand, and said: “Bessy, you may well cry—cry for your lost innocence, your days of sin, your tainted beauty. I would not check your tears, poor fallen child! I do not ask your history—”

“It's no tale for a parson's ears,” said the mother, bitterly. “Cheer up, Bessy!”

“She will cheer up,” said Wilfred, “in time. Bessy,” he continued, taking advantage of her calmness, for the storm of emotion had passed over, and she lay at his feet, a prostrate

and earth-stained flower, "Bessy, you have not long been what you are now: it cannot be many months since you were an innocent child—you are almost a child still."

"Oh!" cried the unhappy creature, "don't speak to me of those days—don't talk of what I was—oh! I must forget all that."

"Don't, Sir! don't talk to her so," said the old woman; "you'll drive her mad!"

"He'll drive me to the river, mother!" said Bessy; "to the cold dark river that has tempted me many a night! Why does he come here, and talk of the time when I was a child!"

"Because I wish to be of use," said Wilfred—"because I am the servant of One who despised not sinners, and who went about doing good to all—because I am sent on His message, to recal the lost and comfort the despairing. Listen to me, Bessy, you must sin no more, my child!"

Bessy shook her head mournfully.

"You must sin no more," he repeated.

“Tell me, Bessy, if another way of life were open to you, would you leave your present courses?”

“I would! I would!” she cried, her blue eyes flashing with the unwonted excitement of a good impulse. “Oh, Sir! I would, indeed—but there is no chance.”

“There is!” said Wilfred. “When you came in, I was offering some needle-work to your mother and sister. There is work enough for you three. You seemed to misunderstand me just now,” he continued, turning to the old woman; “but I hope you will not be so wicked as to refuse an honest means of living, and to force your child upon destruction?”

“Mother!” cried Anne, “take the work. He’s a good gentleman, and won’t harm us! Take the work, and let Bessy stay with us!”

The old woman was subdued at last.

“I’m a wretched old sinner,” she murmured, “and you’re the first gentleman, Sir, that ever was kind to us since we lived here. I’ll take

the work, Sir, and thank you for it ; and Bessy shall stay at home."

"That is right," said Wilfred ; "you shall have the work to-day. I trust you, that you will take care of it, and do it well ; and I hope, if so, that I shall be able to get you more. I shall bid you good-bye now, and I hope you will not be vexed when I come again !"

"I shan't, Sir," said the old woman, "now that you've seen Bessy, and know about her. I thought you'd be hard upon us when you found out what we are. I shall be glad to see you, Sir, any day."

"Good-bye," said Wilfred ; "Bessy, will you come with your sister, when she brings the work to me ?"

"I couldn't dare, Sir," murmured the poor girl.

"I shall expect you," said Wilfred. "Anne, you will take your sister with you ?" And with these words he departed, and proceeded to more

scenes of misery, crime, and squalid wretchedness, on his errand of peace and love.

Thus were his days passed. He was indeed a "son of consolation;" and it was peculiarly his vocation to comfort the distressed, raise the despairing, and soften the impenitent. He had a word of sympathy and kindness for all; and without ever forgetting the peculiar dignity of his calling, he could deal tenderly with the poor, and seldom failed in conquering their reserve, and even their surliness and obstinacy. He could see the spark of good glimmering in the heart's depths of the most degraded; and he could tend and nurse that spark till it broke into an upward flame.

He had the manly truth, courage, and firmness that commanded respect, together with all a woman's purity of mind and unselfish kindness. These natural qualities, combined with his noble singleness of purpose, and his faithful love to God and man, rendered him peculiarly suited for his present duties.

In ministering to the spiritual wants of the poor, he never forgot their temporal necessities, and where he could relieve them, he always did so in the wisest manner. He was indefatigable in his endeavours to procure work for the unemployed, and still more so for those whom want had driven to unlawful means of gain—for his great wish was to save the lost, and raise the fallen. Of course he was often deceived, often imposed upon, but this did not discourage him ; and he soon learned caution and prudence, without learning suspicion.

He found that people were often rendered trustworthy by being trusted, and true by being believed ; and he awoke honourable feelings in the breast of many an outcast of society, by his fearless confidence and absence of suspicion. So it was with the sullen old woman whose wretched home we have just described ; no one had trusted her for years with any article of value. She had more than once been guilty of theft, often of dishonesty. It was long since

she had earned a penny by fair means, yet Wilfred entrusted her with work, risking its loss indeed, but hoping better things.

It must not be supposed that he thus risked another's property without authority from the owner : the lady to whom the work belonged was one of Wilfred's friends, and had heard of this wretched family from him ; and as she, too, had the charity which " hopeth all things," she empowered him to offer work to the old woman and her daughter.

The existence of poor Bessy was then unknown to Wilfred ; but when he beheld the misery of that unfortunate young creature, he did indeed rejoice that he could rescue her, if but for a time, from the fearful alternative of living in sin, or dying in want ; and he resolved that as long as his efforts could prevent it, she should never return to the pollution she had quitted.

Some people may deem that Wilfred was a romantic visionary, seeking excitement in the

reformation of criminals ; others may condemn him for what they call a “ morbid sympathy” for the sorrows of the wicked, and an undue partiality towards those who deserved to be neglected ; but they are all mistaken. He sought to discharge his duty, and if, in doing so, he found a noble, though often a painful excitement, he scarcely knew it ; for of his own feelings he never thought. And as for his “ morbid sympathies” with criminals, the term is indeed falsely applied to that Christian benevolence which induced him, abhorring sin, and shrinking from its contact with the instinct of a pure nature, to seek, amid foul pollution, for those who had fallen lowest into the mire, and strive to raise them into purer air.

Let the charities of the state, or of private individuals, be bestowed on the most deserving ; this is as it should be ; but let clergymen remember in whose steps it is their glorious privilege to tread—let them remember how He announced Himself, as sent “ unto the lost sheep”—and let

them also remember, that they are spiritual physicians, and that the sick have need of them, more than the whole—and most of all, they are needed by those, who, in the delirium or idiocy of sin's fell disease, are unconscious of their peril, and spurn the hand that would heal them—the sleepers on the precipice—the idlers within the dragon's reach—the loiterers in the poisoned air—their mission is to these !

CHAPTER XIV.

The poet in a golden clime was born,
With golden stars above,
Dower'd with the hate of hate, the scorn of scorn,
The love of love.

TENNYSON.

LILIAN'S wedding-day was fast approaching. Two days before that auspicious event, the little party at Belgrave Square received the additional society of Miss Barbara Lynne, who had allowed herself to be persuaded to accept the office of one of Lilian's bridesmaids, and to spend three days in the worldly and contaminating atmosphere of her aunt's house. Barbara

consented the more willingly, as she was anxious or rather curious, to renew her acquaintance with her cousins, to see what Wilfred could have found to fall in love with in Lilian, and to ascertain whether Alice was worth anything, of which she had strong hopes. Her brother Frederick came from London to fetch her, and she was to return with him or Harry, the day after the wedding.

It was great dissipation for Barbara, but fortunately she was not excitable. Her aunt and cousins received her very cordially, though Lilian thought it rather a bore to have to make her acquaintance just now, and Alice did not anticipate any great joy from her society. But to do Barbara justice, she did not make herself at all disagreeable.

She did not often get into the way of the lovers, she scarcely once spoke disparagingly of the things around her; she uttered very few contradictions, and even those were somewhat modified. She even admired some of Lilian's

jewels, and expressed her entire approval of the bridal dress ; and furthermore, she stated that Lord Rossendale's appearance and manner pleased her extremely, and that he had a most sensible countenance. There was a little difficulty in persuading her to conform to the attire fixed upon for Lilian's six bridesmaids, but she consented at last to appear in white muslin, blue scarf, and transparent bonnet, wreathed with blue *Nemophila* (Alice's idea) ; and it must be said that Miss Lynne looked very handsome, though not comfortable, in her gay apparel.

The day came, and the wedding took place. The church was crowded, and so was the breakfast that followed. I will not describe the ceremony, nor plagiarise from the "Morning Post." I will not even name the bishop who read the service, nor the two clergymen who "assisted" him. I shall leave the reader to guess whether Lilian's veil was long or square, and whether her "magnificent Brussels' lace" was in the form of flounces or

skirts—suffice it to say, the wedding took place. It really was a gay wedding, too. No one cried. Every one even went so far as to look happy, which is seldom the case on those occasions. All was brightness and sunshine on the day of Lilian's marriage.

At last came the farewells. The sisters could not but part with many tears, for it was the severance of a tender tie ; and they grieved to think that never more should they two have all things in common, and that, dear as they would ever be to each other, still their interests were sundered and their lives from henceforth would flow in one channel no longer. But Lilian was soon consoled by her husband's looks and words ; and Alice thought of her sister's present and future happiness, and forgot her own loss and sorrow. Mrs. Clinton cried for two minutes and kissed Lilian for three ; shook hands vehemently with " dear Rossendale," kissed him too, and finally parted with a smile from her favourite child, and made

herself infinitely agreeable to her many guests until the last of them departed ; and then even upon her spirits fell something of the gloom that pervades a scene of revelry when the revellers are gone.

Turning to her two nephews, who still lingered in the room, Fred because he had nothing to do, and Harry because his sister detained him, she said :

“ You will dine here this evening, like dear, good-natured boys, will you not ? We shall want enlivening ! Mrs. Lester is coming, and you can have another game of chess, Harry.”

They consented, and went away, to lean over the park rails during the intervening hours.

Mrs. Clinton, Barbara, and Alice remained together. Alice would gladly have taken refuge in her room, but her mother had said to her, not long before :

“ I really beg of you, Alice, to exert yourself a little when Lilian is gone, and try to amuse people—don’t leave me all the work to do.

And do, Alice, try to entertain that stiff girl. I can't get on with her at all!"

So Alice remained. It was a period of great discomfort. Mrs. Clinton's excitement was at an end; she was fairly out of spirits, and almost out of temper. Alice was beginning to realise the loss of her sister, and felt thoroughly sick at heart; and Barbara, who thought it incumbent upon her to "enliven" both, went on unconsciously trying her aunt's temper by her every movement and remark, and jarring her cousin's nerves by the rattle of her knitting-needles.

"Dear me!" said Mrs. Clinton, "do get something to do, Alice! and don't look so uncomfortable, you quite provoke me!"

Mrs. Clinton was herself at that moment the personification of indolence and discontent.

"It's a very bad plan," said Barbara, "to sit thinking, and doing nothing. I dare say you feel low, Alice; but if you would exert yourself, you would be a great deal happier."

“Of course !” said Mrs. Clinton. “You really do give way to everything, Alice ! Think of my exertions all this day ! I really am tired to death, and I have such a dreadful headache !”

Alice knew that her mother always had a “dreadful headache” when she was not pleased, and therefore did not suggest any stronger remedy than an hour’s rest in her own room ; but Barbara, who took everything *au pied de la lettre*, instantly recommended the application of scraped horseradish to her aunt’s eyes.

“That always cures *my* headaches,” she explained. “It makes the eyes red for some time, and they will smart very much ; but it gives instant relief.”

“It would do me no good,” was the somewhat ungracious reply ; “and I can’t have my eyes hurt. I shall go and lie down till dinner-time,” and with a deep sigh she departed.

“My aunt does not look ill,” said Barbara.

“She is tired, and out of spirits,” answered Alice; “but I do not think she is ill.”

“You look very pale,” said Barbara, laying down her knitting. “The kind of life you have been leading has not agreed with you.”

“No, I don’t think it has,” said Alice. “I shall not be sorry to leave London.”

“I am sure you did not enjoy the season—did you?” asked her cousin.

“Oh yes, I did indeed,” replied Alice; and Barbara looked disappointed. “I enjoyed almost every thing; but now I am tired of it, and I shall miss Lilian so much! I wonder if they are at The Hazels yet!”

“They have been gone just an hour and a half,” said Barbara, consulting her watch; “and it is fully two hours’ drive. Tell me, Alice, do you think my aunt will wish to return there soon?”

“I don’t know. She will not wish to remain here many days longer, I think; but she never talks of going home.”

“Mamma hopes you will come to Brighton. She thinks it would be a pleasant change, and that aunt Florence would like it. Has she thought of it, do you think, Alice?”

“She has occasionally mentioned it. It is not unlikely that we may go there, as mamma has not seen aunt Jane for a long time.”

“We should be very glad, indeed, if you would come. I have seen very little of you, Alice, since you were a child—since the days when I used sometimes to come with Wilfred to The Hazels, and you never would let me put your garden in order.”

Alice smiled, and then sighed at the reminiscence. It opened the door for many sweet and sad recollections, and she silently admitted them for a few seconds.

“We must renew our acquaintance, Barbara,” she said, “if mamma and I go to Brighton. I shall like to see aunt Jane again, too, very much. I remember those days quite well. I almost wish they could come back.”

“It is not very wise to wish that, Alice : it does no good.”

“Well, I cannot help looking back to that time, we were all so happy then—and I thought no place on earth was more beautiful than The Hazels.”

“Oh, Alice ! surely you don’t wish to be a child again ! I dare say, though, you wish you had never mixed in the world. That kind of life never leads to happiness.”

There was something in Barbara’s tone that gave Alice a chill feeling, as of the presence of some icy influence. She felt that there was a sort of truth in her cousin’s words, but it was a truth that Barbara *thought* not *felt*. How could she feel it ? She had had no experience of “that kind of life.”

Alice replied :

“My dissipation is over now, at all events ; and I am not at all sorry, for I feel that without Lilian it would be no pleasure to go out. Besides, I am tired of it.”

The conversation flagged. Barbara began to speculate on her cousin's character, and wonder whether she really was or was not "worldly;" and Alice thought of The Hazels, and how that dear old home would seem to Lilian, revisiting it in her new position—whether the turf would appear more green, the air purer, the flowers more beautiful, now that Lilian could enjoy them in the atmosphere of happy love. Alice pictured her standing among the roses in her radiant bridal beauty, beside her admiring husband, on that green terrace, the scene of their childhood's sports.

"Will she think of those days? will she, in the midst of her happiness give one thought, one feeling of regret to the home she has left, to the companion of her whole life, the sister who is quite alone now, and who will never cease to miss her?"

Thus mused Alice, while Barbara continued her knitting and her speculations, till the dressing-bell put a stop to both.

When Mrs. Clinton reappeared in the drawing-room before dinner, she replied to the inquiries of her niece and daughter by stating that her headache was a great deal worse. Barbara suggested the horseradish again, but was instantly put down ; and a gloomy silence prevailed until the entrance of Mrs. Lester, whose presence induced the patient to exert herself a little. "The Mr. Lynnes," were shortly announced ; and to the surprise of all, Harry was accompanied by his brother Wilfred, instead of Frederick. Every one was unfeignedly glad to see him, and Harry explained that Frederick (who was always scatter-brained) had suddenly remembered another dinner engagement. "He makes you a thousand apologies," said Harry, "and he sent me to hunt out Wilfred and bring him to you in his place. I found him at home, for a wonder, and here he is."

Little did the speaker guess with what an effort, with how severe a pang, did Wilfred

consent to accompany him to that house which he had never entered since the moment that had changed the whole current of his life. But the pang was short; with the true bravery of a pure will, he crushed down the reviving enemy, and entered his aunt's house with a pale, but cheerful countenance.

Mrs. Clinton was herself again at the first sight of his familiar face. She had long ago forgiven his "presumption," and had almost forgotten it now; for she was really very fond of Wilfred, who had always been as a son to her. He was most cordially received; Mrs. Lester had much to talk over with him, Barbara had many questions to ask, and Alice was delighted to see her old friend and brother once more, for she never remembered so long an interruption to their intercourse, except in his school and college days. Frederick's carelessness was heartily forgiven. "The family dinner-party" was a more cheerful one than is usually the case after a wedding; and little

was said about the event of the morning, in consideration for Wilfred, as all present knew of his former attachment to Lady Rossendale.

Mrs. Clinton became quite lively in the course of the evening, and conversed gaily with every one. She could talk pleasantly and well, which is not a very common gift. The flow of her good-humour was a little checked by Barbara remarking that she thought the headache must be a good deal better; but the observation was soon forgotten, and Barbara commenced an argumentative conversation with her brother Wilfred in a corner of the room, of which only a few words reached the table round which the rest of the party were seated. It was not long allowed to continue uninterrupted, for Mrs. Clinton, who would allow no monopoly, cried out :

“Wilfred ! what are you and Barbara talking about ? I hope you have nearly exhausted the subject.”

“By no means, aunt Florence,” said Bar-

bara, with great solemnity of manner ; “ the subject is inexhaustible.”

“ I am sorry to hear it,” said Mrs. Clinton. “ Could you not defer its prosecution to another opportunity ?”

“ Pray, aunt,” replied Barbara, “ allow me to convince Wilfred ; he is expressing such shocking opinions—quite dreadful, for a clergyman !”

“ Let us hear them, Wilfred !” cried Harry.

“ Not just now,” answered Wilfred, “ aunt Florence would not like a general discussion.”

“ I should detest it,” said aunt Florence.

“ But,” persisted Barbara, in her most strident tones, “ just let me tell you what Wilfred says : he says that clergymen should not discourage vice, nor preach against sin, nor condemn anything, nor—”

“ My dear Barbara,” said Wilfred, “ how entirely you have misunderstood me ! I said, or I meant to say, that we should perhaps do more good, if we exerted ourselves less in

preaching down vice, and condemning evil practices, and more in extolling virtue and displaying truth in its goodness and beauty."

"Well, I don't know about that," said Harry.
"I am not competent to judge."

"I agree with Mr. Lynne," said Mrs. Lester.
"Show how beautiful and attractive is truth, and people will soon forsake error."

"But truth is not attractive," said Barbara, little thinking that she herself was an illustration of her proposition, "truth is not attractive, and goodness is not beautiful, to fallen man."

"I do not speak of the relative, but of the positive beauty of goodness," said Wilfred ; "and man is not fallen so low, as to be utterly blinded to this beauty, were his attention called to it."

"Oh !" interrupted Mrs. Clinton, "don't talk about 'relative' and 'positive.' Let me settle the question. We all admire truth and goodness in some people, and in others we

don't admire them at all. We judge according to the manifestation — there's a long word !”

“ Those who make truth and goodness unattractive do a great deal of harm, I think,” said Alice.

“ Much more harm than those who don't think about them at all,” added Harry.

“ No,” said Wilfred ; “ those who don't think about them at all, do the harm of doing no good.”

“ Not very clear,” murmured Harry.

“ And those who make them unattractive, as Alice says,” continued Wilfred, “ do not do so intentionally ; on the contrary, they wish to make people love goodness and admire truth, but they mistake the means of doing so ; and if harm, instead of good, results in some few instances from their efforts, it is very much the fault of those who look only to the beauty of the manifestation, and not to that of the principle manifested.”

“ But the manifestation should be beautiful,” said Alice.

“ It should,” answered Wilfred, “ and often is ; but it is tintured and often apparently defaced by the natural character of the person displaying it, and by many other circumstances. The same light shines through a diamond and a piece of horn—in one manifestation it is beautiful, in the other not.”

“ Similes prove nothing,” said Barbara. “ Wilfred, you really are so very fanciful, one cannot argue with you.”

“ Then do not argue,” interposed Mrs. Clinton. “ Barbara, I am sure you sing, or play : there is the piano, and here are some attentive listeners.”

“ Yes, do play, Barbara,” said Wilfred. He was about to get another trial over at once—that of seeing Lilian’s piano played by other hands.

Barbara very obediently went to the instrument and commenced a fantasia or divertisse-

ment (by the bye, it is a mystery to me why those airy names are always given to the heaviest and dullest pieces of piano-forte labour). She played very correctly, kept perfect time, and without thumping, she touched the keys as if they were red-hot, which we believe, constitutes what is called "execution." But the "attentive listeners" were wanting, despite Mrs. Clinton's rash promise.

Before Barbara had worked through two pages of her task, the conversation had begun afresh. There is a kind of music which encourages conversation, every bar of which music seems to say, "never mind me, I had rather not be listened to;" and such was Barbara's *divertissement*—it diverted no one but herself.

Harry began talking about the opera with his aunt. Mrs. Lester made some remark which led the conversation to the drama, and Wilfred speculated on the possibility of restoring the stage to its original and noble inten-

tion—of representing heroism and virtue in action before the eyes of men. If this could never be done, he feared that theatrical amusements could not be conscientiously supported. Mrs. Clinton would not listen to his scruples, and Harry remarked, that apparently everything pleasant was wrong.

Alice sighed, and said that she thought there was a kind of dim fear which mixed itself up in all pleasures, and spoiled the sense of enjoyment.

“Not in all pleasures,” said Wilfred. “We may have a great deal of pleasure without doing wrong

“Why should we fear youth’s draught of joy,

If pure, should sparkle less ?

Why should the cup the sooner cloy

Which God has deigned to bless ?”

“A pretty stanza,” said Harry, “out of an incomprehensible book.”

“Oh, Harry !” cried Alice, “do you think the ‘Christian Year’ incomprehensible ?”

“ You surely must admire Keble?” said Mrs. Lester.

“ It is a marvel to me,” replied Harry, “ what misty poetry is admired by ladies. Keble, for instance ; you all say you understand him, as you do Tennyson and Keats ; but to us they all sing in an unknown tongue.”

“ Have you read much of Keble, Harry?” asked Wilfred.

“ Not much,” replied Harry, “ he’s not in my line ; but if I were ever so good, I should not be clever enough to make him out.”

“ Oh yes, you would, Harry,” said Alice : “ there is nothing ‘ misty ’ in his poetry.”

“ Well, perhaps when I am of Wilfred’s profession, I shall agree with him in liking Keble.”

“ I trust, Harry,” said his brother, “ that before that time arrives, you will like many things that you seldom think of now.”

The youth’s countenance darkened into an

expression of deep gloom as Wilfred spoke, but the shade soon disappeared. Mrs. Lester, however, with her usual quick discernment, saw the trace of the passing feeling, and said :

“ We generally end by liking what we wish to like, I think—we begin by admiring, then we love, and finally imitate.”

The conversation was becoming too much what Mrs. Clinton called “ wise.” She liked a little intellectual, or rather, clever talk, but not philosophy, which she classed among the “ uncomfortable subjects” that occasionally obtrude themselves.

“ You were talking about poetry just now, Harry,” she said. “ I have not read Keble, but I quite agree with you about Tennyson.”

“ I don’t like Tennyson much,” said Mrs. Lester ; “ but I always feel as if my own stupidity were to blame.”

“ I am not so modest,” observed Mrs. Clinton. “ I feel that Tennyson’s obscurity is to blame. I cannot bear obscure poetry.”

“Nor I,” said Harry. “What is the use of it? Poetry should please and amuse us: we rest our minds over a book of poetry, after puzzling them with philosophy in prose.”

“Or we enjoy a little comfortable excitement, and work ourselves up into the heroics or the dismal,” said Mrs. Clinton. “Alice’s friend, Tennyson, neither rests or excites one.”

“But, mamma,” remonstrated Alice, “I cannot help thinking Harry is mistaken, and I cannot agree with you either. Is not poetry intended to instruct and raise our minds, rather than to soothe or excite them? And is not Tennyson elevating and instructive?”

“Why Alice,” said Harry, “what do you mean?—you, with all your romance, beginning to admire instructive poetry! I will be your laureate, and extemporise a piece after your own heart; and it shall be ‘elevating’ too:

“The world is round, and every day
Upon itself it turns;
The moon spins round the earth, they say,
And shines, but never burns:

The little stars are not so small
As they appear to be,
The sun is a stupendous ball
A great way off, you see :
Eclipses of the sun and moon
I really can't explain ;
Astronomy, if studied soon,
Will make all that quite plain."

Every one laughed.

" Well, Harry," said Wilfred, " you certainly have the gift of quick versification, and your poetry is anything but obscure."

Here the "divertissement" came to a close, and Barbara having been duly thanked (either for playing or for leaving off), she inquired what all the laughing was about.

" Harry has become an improvisatore," explained their aunt. " Alice has inspired him. She has been describing her favourite style of poetry, and Harry has produced a specimen for her."

" A burlesque," said Alice.

" We must have Miss Lynne's opinion

now," interposed Mrs. Lester. "What is your idea of poetry, Miss Lynne?"

"I have no idea of poetry," said Barbara, "I cannot give an opinion. I cannot see that good sense is any the better for being cut into lengths and rhymed; and I know that a great deal of nonsense, and worse than nonsense, is rendered acceptable by that means."

"Oh, Barbara!" cried her brothers and her cousins, with one voice, while her aunt and Mrs. Lester smiled at Alice's face of horror.

"Yes," bravely continued Barbara, "I see you are all shocked; but I have only said what I think, as I always do. I don't dislike poetry; but what is the use of it? One can only value a thing for its usefulness. You must all admit that; and where's the use of poetry?"

A perfect shower of replies followed the question.

“To amuse,” said Harry. “To please,” said Mrs. Clinton. “To do good,” said Mrs. Lester. “To awake our best impulses, and call out such feelings of our nature as lie deepest and soar highest,” said Wilfred, in a low voice.

Alice’s eyes sparkled, and the colour rose to her cheeks, while her young heart beat fast with the excitement of her thoughts. Strong in her consciousness of the sympathy of one at least of the party, she felt able to give expression to something of the ideas that usually lay imprisoned in her mind.

“The use of poetry!” she said. “Where is the use of the purple clouds at sunset, of the lark’s song, of the streaked blossoms of the wild pansy—of all *this* poetry not written by man, nor read by him enough, in this blind, deaf world? Has it not a thousand noble uses? Does it not call to us to trust, and believe, and love the Being who made all things so beautiful? And does it not turn us

from evil tastes, and awake all that is pure and good within us, if we only listen to its teaching? And the use of poetry—is it not the same? Real poetry raises us from the evils and errors of things as they are, to the glorious beauty of things as they ought to be, and will be, when there are more true poets in the world, and it has learnt to hear them.”

She stopped, breathless and trembling. All eyes were upon her, some with looks of quiet half-admiration, and some with cold surprise; the glow faded from her cheek, and the flash from her eye—she was once more the quiet Alice, with her pale face and drooping eyelids.

But she had begun a theme on which those who feel deeply cannot be silent; and Wilfred spoke in his low, clear, earnest voice:

“Poetry is the natural language of lofty thought and noble aspiration. Our best and purest—I may say with reverence, our most divine thoughts and feelings, belong to song,

not to speech. We break forth into music, when that which is divine within us awakes into life; and those who hear us become poets too, and think in tune to our harmony. Believe me, the true poet is the world's benefactor, the world's guide, the man nearest to the image of God " (and Wilfred's voice sunk, and his head bowed reverently at the name). "He is the man of the largest love, the strongest faith, the most exhaustless hope. He sees into the life of things, as Wordsworth says. He reads the inner meaning of the creations around him. He discerns eternal truth from earthly reality, and he acts his part righteously and nobly in the world, knowing and feeling how much of it is transient and apparent only, and how much is true and not to pass away. Living in time, he is ever conscious of eternity. Dealing with men and things, he recognises in them embodied spirits and symbolized truths; and he scatters, as it were, to the four winds, frag-

ments of his mind, notes from the ceaseless harmonies to which his spirit listens; and men gather up his gifts, and live the better and the purer for each poetic thought they have garnered up within them."

Barbara could be silent no longer, it was more than she could bear.

"Oh, Wilfred!" she cried, "how can you say such dreadful things—such perfect nonsense? Poetry make men better! It is perfectly profane."

"The holy men of old," said Wilfred, "who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, were all poets. All the prophets and leaders—all those directly inspired men who were bidden to teach, to warn, to convince, to show the promises or terrors of the future, employed the language of poetry to deliver their high message. Even Moses, the man of 'uncircumcised lips,' became a poet in the moment of his holiest triumph. I say again, there is no language but song for the best and purest thoughts of man."

"It is true—it is all true!" cried Alice,

lighting up again. "Wilfred, I know you are right. Oh, Wilfred! how I thank you."

"Perhaps," said Harry, "I might thank him too, if I understood him, as you seem to do, Alice; but as it is, I can only say, thank you for nothing. But really, Barbara," he continued, looking at his sister's frigid yet indignant countenance, "I don't see anything to be shocked at in what these enthusiasts say."

"No, indeed," said Mrs. Lester, "I cannot quite take in their ideas, they are out of my reach; but I can admire and believe, and I do believe that poetry has many uses."

"Of course it has," said Mrs. Clinton; "there is no occasion to follow Wilfred's flights to prove that. And really, Alice, I can't think what has excited you so much—you, who take everything so coolly, suddenly working yourself up about a mere matter of taste! How will you ever go through the world?"

"Alice is excitable," said Barbara. "I think, Alice, you have picked up too many

of Wilfred's wild notions ; but you will soon lose them, I'm sure."

"I don't think she will," said Harry, "not even if you take her in hand, Barbara."

And so the conversation dwindled, and fell to the level of everyday talk.

END OF VOL. I.

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